Commentary

Volume Seventy-four, Number Six, December 1982

Banks, Tanks, and Freedom
John Van Meer

Socialism & Its Irresponsibilities: The Case of Irving Howe
Midge Decter

Theologian of the Holocaust
Hyam Maccoby

Scenes from the Cedar Bar
Lionel Abel

The Record in Latin America
Max Singer

My Friend Martin
Joseph Epstein

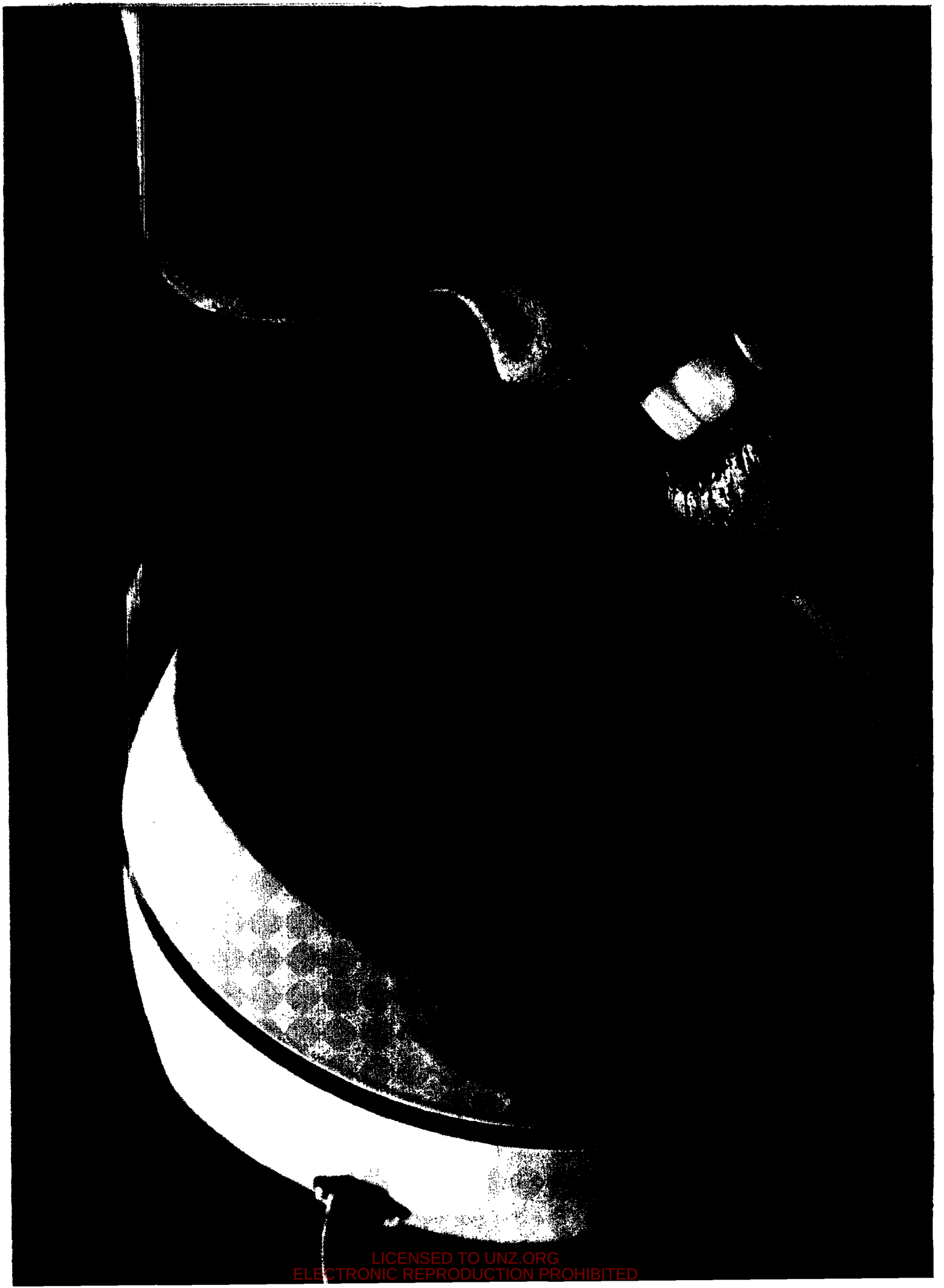
How to Read the Bible
Chaim Raphael

Movies: Why Herzog Differs
Richard Grenier

The Response to "J'Accuse"—*A Special Section*

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE/$2.75

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What isn't changing at the Bell System.

You've been hearing about the big changes coming to the Bell System. Changes in the way we're structured and in the way we do business.

These changes will help us usher in a whole new era in telecommunications: the Information Age.

But in the midst of all this change, the Bell System is also committed to seeing that certain things remain unchanged.

This country now takes dependable telephone service for granted. It's probably hard for you to remember the last time your telephone service was interrupted or you couldn't get a dial tone.

The fact is, America has the best telecommunications system in the world. And that will remain unchanged. Your telephone company will still have the same dependable people standing behind it. And their goal will continue to be the same: providing the best telephone service at reasonable rates. So what will change? In the future, there will be new places to go for new kinds of telephone equipment. Probably some changes in how you get a telephone repaired. And how you are billed.

These changes will take place gradually. So at first you might not even notice them. And they certainly won't affect the most important thing for you—your ability simply to pick up your telephone and get in touch with anyone you want to, whenever you want to.

There's something else that won't change. The Bell System has a hard-earned reputation for integrity in our dealings with the public and for leadership and involvement in community affairs. We intend to live up to that reputation even as our business undergoes dramatic changes.

Along with your local Bell Telephone company, we'll be telling you about these changes as they occur. In ads like this.

In each of these ads you'll find a telephone number. That number is an important part of our "Let's Talk" program. This program has been set up by the Bell System to help you understand exactly what the changes at the Bell System will mean for you right now. And in the future.

Call us. At 1 800 555-5000.

There'll be somebody to talk to. Somebody to help you. Somebody to answer your questions. To get you information.

So call us. And we'll be talking with you. **Let's talk.**

Bell System

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary

VOLUME 74 NUMBER SIX *DECEMBER 1982*

Articles 17 Banks, Tanks, and Freedom *John Van Meer*

25 Socialism & Its Irresponsibilities: The Case of Irving Howe *Midge Decter*

33 Theologian of the Holocaust *Hyam Maccoby*

38 Scenes from the Cedar Bar *Lionel Abel*

43 The Record in Latin America *Max Singer*

Observations 50 My Friend Martin *Joseph Epstein*

56 How to Read the Bible *Chaim Raphael*

Movies 59 Why Herzog Differs *Richard Grenier*

Letters 4 The Response to "J'Accuse"

Caspar W. Weinberger, Elias M. Schwarzbart, Aaron Goldman, William Bowen, Jascha Kessler, Bruce F. Sterling, J.B. Drori, Beatrice Sadowsky, Elliot Justin, Joan Swirsky, Joel Sorkin, Henry Sherman, Steven E. Plaut, William A. Collins, Benno Weiser Varon, Morris Grossman, David Bar-Illan, David R. Zukerman, M. Donald Coleman, Bernard Adelman, Bruce J. Schneider, Jules D'Arncourt, B.J. Sadoff, Jr., Bill Johnston, Jr., Jeff Alsdorf, Tibor R. Machan, William A. Baker, Alexander L. Singer, Roy A. Childs, Jr., F.W. Meeker, Joel J. Sokolsky, E. Jerome Benveniste, Eugen Loebl, Irving Zuckerman, William Seltzer, Robert W. Wilson, Joel W. Westbrook, Charles Ansell, Nathan A. Barack, Charles S. Berdiansky, Stanley Paluch, Mary McGrory, Theodore Olson, Joseph Losos, Robert R. Kohn, Sergio M. Garcia, Roger J. Ruvolo, Melford E. Spiro, Norman Podhoretz

Additional letters from *Stephen Siteman, Sidney Hook, Michael W. Gold, William E. Hewitt, Harold Steinberg, Tuan Nguyen,* and others

Editor: Norman Podhoretz
Executive Editor: Neal Kozodoy
Managing Editor: Marion Magid
Associate Editor: Brenda Brown
Contributing Editors: Robert Alter, Milton Himmelfarb, Walter Laqueur
Comptroller: Philip Shamis
Production Manager: Bruce Lodi
Circulation Manager: Helene Hansen
Cover: The Drawing Board, Inc.

COMMENTARY is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $2.75, $27 a year; 3 years $72; 5 years $108—Add $4.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1982 by the American Jewish Committee; all rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions—Indexed in *Readers' Guide, Book Review Digest, Public Affairs Information Service, Index to Jewish Periodicals, ABC Pol Sci, Historical Abstracts,* and *America: History and Life*—Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. Publication Number ISSN 0010-2601
EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A carat or more.
A rare diamond. For that rare individual who never doubted you'd make it.

The one and a half carat diamond necklace shown below is enlarged for detail.

A diamond of a carat or more. There's only one in a million.

Every diamond is rare. But of all diamonds found, a solitaire of a carat or more is only one in a million.

And, like love, becomes more precious with time.

A miracle among miracles. Born from the earth. Reborn on a woman.

The extraordinary diamond of a carat or more.

Show the world you couldn't have made it without her.

A diamond is forever. DeBeers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Statement of Aims

In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Maynard I. Wishner, *President*

The Commentary Publication Committee

Frederick P. Rose, *Chairman*

Morris B. Abram
Norman E. Alexander
Donald M. Blinken
Theodore Ellenoff
Edward E. Elson
Richard C. Ernst
Maurice Glinert
Lawrence Goldmuntz
Robert H. Haines
Lewis J. Laventhol
Bess Myerson
Robert L. Pelz
Ned Pines
Richard Schifter
Nanette Scofield
David Sher
Henry Sherman
John Slawson
Alan M. Stroock*
Laurence A. Tisch

**Honorary Member*

Letters from Readers

The Response to "J'Accuse"

The correspondence on Norman Podhoretz's "J'Accuse" [September] has been so heavy that we have borrowed the space normally devoted to book reviews in order to convey a fair impression of it. Even so, we have been able to accommodate only a small fraction of the letters we have received, many of them in a more abbreviated form than we would have liked. BOOKS IN REVIEW *will be back next month.*

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"J'Accuse" . . . has been read with considerable interest. . . .

I fully support the President's policy which assures the survival and security of Israel.

I have said a number of times that Israel is our closest ally in the Middle East—but not our only ally. We have an obligation to insure Israel's security in light of current and historic threats. At the same time, we are obliged to help other states in the Middle East to meet their valid defense needs.

In matters relating to the Middle East, it is difficult for the United States to act in a manner that is completely free from controversy. We cannot isolate ourselves because we may be subjected to criticism. We are a powerful nation attempting to use our power to bring peace, as was acknowledged recently by Israel's Minister of Defense.

I can assure you of my continued support for Israel while expressing the hope for peace and stability in the Middle East.

CASPAR W. WEINBERGER
Secretary of Defense
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When, as a young man, I read Emile Zola's *J'Accuse,* I wept. Now, almost sixty years later, reading Norman Podhoretz's "J'Accuse," I wept again.

When, assuming a pious disguise, the enemies of the Jews say, in justification of their condemnation, that they are judging Israel by higher standards of moral conduct, are they not thereby passing judgment on nineteen centuries of Christian history?

And, behind the disguise, are they not concealing the unspoken secret that the New Testament remains the *locus classicus* of both Christian and, yes, Jewish anti-Semitism (was not the New Testament the work of apostate, self-hating Jews?) as divine punishment for the ineradicable sin of deicide and that the Holocaust is its culmination in history? How consoling it must be to the guilt-ridden anti-Semitic soul to find a pretext for proclaiming that Hitler may have been right after all. Can the apotheosis of Arafat be far behind?

Mr. Podhoretz's "J'Accuse" is a mirror that has the power of prophecy. Let those who still treasure the values of Western civilization look into it and see their fate.

ELIAS M. SCHWARZBART
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I had hoped that Norman Podhoretz would write such an article, and he did. . . .

I have been as reluctant as most Jews to ascribe the vitriolic attacks on Israel to an eruption of anti-Semitism, yet he makes out a very good case; there is simply no other explanation for the disproportionality of what happened in Lebanon —tragic as it was—and the obscene abuse heaped on Israel.

I agree with Mr. Podhoretz that what we have here is a symptom—he calls it a cover—of larger ills: a loss of American nerve, the acquiescence in terrorism, and the appeasement of totalitarianism. It's too bad that we Jews are always the initial scapegoats when a nation—or . . . a civilization—loses confidence in its ability to withstand peril or overcome difficulty.

AARON GOLDMAN
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

J'applaude.

WILLIAM BOWEN
Fortune
New York City

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . "J'Accuse" is a remarkably good statement, most particularly because Norman Podhoretz, at the close, puts the whole matter in a perspective that is most important: i.e., the failure of nerve, the incredible loss of belief in the possibility of our institutions, the only possibility we have for freedom in the world. Such a loss of faith and hope, let alone charity (to ourselves) . . . is deeply dismaying to all people of good will and courage. . . .

Jascha Kessler
Santa Monica, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

With one mighty stroke of his inimitable pen, Norman Podhoretz separates the true lovers of Israel from its false and misguided friends with a line so bold and striking that every sensible person who sees it will know at once where he stands.

Bruce F. Sterling
Staten Island, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

I am most grateful for the lucid article by Norman Podhoretz. It helped to restore my perspective on Israel. . . .

It is one thing to be realistically critical of a government, even to condemn those responsible for immoral behavior (the Beirut massacre); but the vituperative onslaught against a people and its government that has recently occurred in the news media is quite another thing. . . .

No matter how hard Israel (and Jews everywhere) try either to be like other nations, or different, they are still condemned. . . .

J. B. Drori, M.D.
Concord, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Congratulations on Norman Podhoretz's incisive exposé of yet another conspiracy to denigrate, yes, and even to delegitimize Israel. More power to him as an advocate for our people in these perilous times.

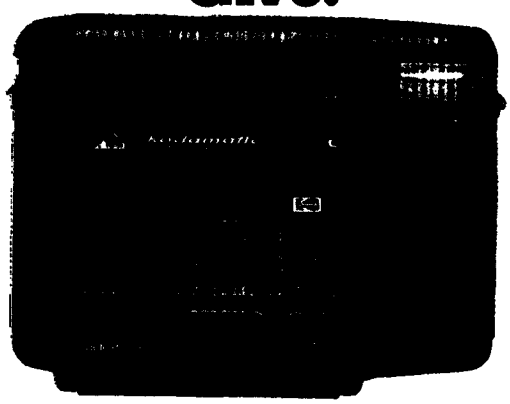
Beatrice Sadowsky
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

Permit me to express my admiration of "J'Accuse." I share Norman Podhoretz's outrage at the prejudiced reporting of the last few months. . . .

Elliot Justin
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Give.



And take.

Smaller than actual size

© Eastman Kodak Company, 1982

And be ready to take again–in an instant.
With the amazing KODAMATIC™ Instant Cameras and Film.

You won't miss a trick.

The new KODAMATIC™ 980L Instant Camera has a light-balancing system that recharges immediately and corrects imperfect light in a flash. It has automatic focus. And it uses faster film. So you can get beautiful instant pictures every time. That's why people call it the gift of instant magic.

It's magical to give. And magical to take. And take and take.

KODAMATIC™ Instant Cameras and Film.
Capture the magic you've been missing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Norman Podhoretz, in his piercingly insightful and provocative article, has answered the questions that have plagued those of us who have followed the action in Lebanon since its onset. . . . He has done this by proving that underneath the faulty logic, the historical distortions, the hypocrisy . . . there is a common denominator—anti-Semitism—which explains the unrestrained ferocity of so many of the commentators and columnists toward Israel. This common denominator also explains why resolution of the Sinai question did not satisfy Israel's career critics any more than resolution of the problems of the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, or whatever will satisfy them. . . .

Although this unmistakable truth is indeed bitter, it . . . will inspire all who take it seriously to be ever more vigilant, ever more protective of Israel, . . . and ever more determined . . . to work toward strengthening the ties that bind the U.S. and Israel together. Mr. Podhoretz's article has given us the understanding that, rational criticisms notwithstanding, those who hate Israel hate the United States as well.

Joan Swirsky
Great Neck, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . To suggest, *à la* Anthony Lewis, Nat Hentoff (and even Nathan Glazer and Seymour Martin Lipset), that Israel doesn't have the sovereign right to make war on its own terms, that Israel is justified in doing battle only when it is fighting for its entire existence, is an absurdity. Israel violated the cease-fire, they fume. Should Israel have waited until the huge quantities of bigger and better arms amassed by the PLO during the cease-fire had been fired and had wreaked their havoc in flesh, . . . blood, and property? Is it only then that Israel may act? . . .

To think that only thirty-six years after Hitler the Jews again are the outcasts of the nations is chilling. . . . Not since the 1930's and the Brown Shirts in Germany has there been such public "understanding" for attacks on innocent Jews. Not since Walter Lippmann "understood" and excused Hitler's anti-Semitism . . . have we seen a spectacle like that of Anthony Lewis (another assimilated Jew) doing his best to put an acceptable face on the PLO.

Anti-Semitism is back, and coming from some of the most unlikely quarters. Norman Podhoretz is right. There's no denying it. Bravo.

Joel Sorkin
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

Lord Halifax (not one of my favorite authors) wrote in his maxims: "A man that should call everything by its right name, would hardly pass the streets without being knocked down as a common enemy."

I do not doubt that Norman Podhoretz, having been bold enough to call the great gorgon of anti-Semitism by its true name, will be the target of any number of brickbats from those who would indulge in this ugliest of human vices yet refuse to hear its name. Unfortunately, too many Jewish voices have already joined the chorus of those who would condemn the mote in Israel's eye while ignoring the beam in their own.

In the clamor over the unfortunate killings in the Palestinian refugee camps, those whose virulent anti-Israel bias has left them without a shred of moral or intellectual integrity willfully refuse to acknowledge these facts:

1. . . . The killings were by Arab Christians motivated by a lust for revenge for the murder of *their* women and children by those same terrorists who hide under the skirts and bodies of innocent civilians—not by Israelis.

2. The Israelis *stopped* the killings when what was supposed to have been a search for killer terrorists, left behind in violation of the Habib accords, turned into an Arab settling of accounts.

3. Had Israel *not* gone into West Beirut or left it as everyone urged it to do, the slaughter in the camps would have been unimaginably greater.

4. Despite the fact that most of the Israeli soldiers in Lebanon had probably suffered some loss of a dear one in the many wars and countless acts of terrorism Israel has had to endure since 1948, there were practically no acts of Israeli rapine, pillage, or murder in the Lebanon incursion. On the contrary, Israel suffered serious losses of lives and treasure (neither of which it can afford) due to its unprecedented policy of forewarning civilians to evacuate the military target areas established among them. Contrast this with the policies of any nation recently at war: the Germans and Japanese and Russians and Americans and Iranians and Nigerians and Indians and Vietnamese—the list is endless, whether we refer to World War II, the slaughter that accompanied the uprisings in Eastern Europe, Vietnam, the partition of India (and subsequent conflict between India and Pakistan), Biafra, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq. In contrast, Israel should get the Nobel peace prize for the way it has conducted itself in Lebanon!

Commentary and Mr. Podhoretz have done a valuable service in running a number of articles on the roots and practice of anti-Semitism during recent months ("The Theory and Practice of Anti-Semitism" by Michael R. Marrus, August 1982; "The Delegitimation of Israel" by Ruth R. Wisse, July 1982; "The Problem of Christian Anti-Semitism" by Norman Ravitch, April 1982). Mr. Podhoretz's courageous and thought-provoking "J'Accuse" is a fitting coda, and should be a sober call to all who have the remotest interest in justice and decency to search their souls—and their memories—before engaging further in what Mr. Podhoretz has justly called an "explosion of invective . . . unprecedented in the public discourse of this country." . . .

Henry Sherman
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

"J'Accuse" was published shortly before the massacre in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut. Since that time, the flood of invective in the press has grown, if possible, even more overwhelming (and Mr. Podhoretz reviewed only the American press, which has been restrained compared to that of Europe).

. . . I have long advocated a mental exercise to test whether a particular harangue is a manifestation of anti-Semitism. The test involves replacing "Israel" and "Jews" by any other nation and restating the arguments, or seeking somewhat analogous situations involving groups other than Jews. . . . The test is not always easy, since full analogies to the Arab-Israeli conflict do not exist, but it is useful nevertheless.

Would the press have accused, tried, and hanged any other state for an event comparable to the Beirut massacre? Would the press have ignored the most relevant fact, that the Israelis did not do any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

killing? That the killers were known, in fact, to be members of the paragovernmental ruling party of Lebanon? Would any court ignore the fact that the accused had no motivation for the crime, and were themselves the primary political losers? In any other context, the worst accusation leveled at the country involved would have been poor judgment in allowing the Phalangists to enter the camps. . . .

STEVEN E. PLAUT
Technion-Israel Institute
of Technology
Haifa, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a Christian and a priest I feel patronized by the general reaction to the Beirut massacre. Has anti-Semitism gone so far that we Christians are robbed of our own atrocities? The accomplice can never be more guilty than the killer unless the killer has no free will and the accomplice uses him like a windup toy. The scenario of Menachem Begin turning to Ariel Sharon and saying, "Okay, Arik, unleash the Christian hordes," is as anti-Christian as it is anti-Semitic. It implies that Christians live in a moral vacuum and only need shifty Jews to aim them at helpless Palestinians. We who gave the world the Inquisition, the Crusades, and the pogroms don't have to be manipulated. We are self-starters. Atrocity-wise we are state of the art. Jesus Christ gave us the highest example of morality possible and we have the worst track record possible.

After experiencing Christian "charity" for so long, it was criminal for the Israelis to let the Phalange into the refugee camps, but no one *made* the Christians slaughter men, women, and children. It is not a Jewish atrocity, it is our atrocity. So let the Lebanese Christians, the Pope, Jerry Falwell, Mother Teresa, and me sit *shiva* for the victims and feel shame for the sins of our people.

Menachem Begin is reputed to have said to his cabinet: "The Gentiles kill the Gentiles and now they come to hang the Jews." If he said it, he was right. . . . It is bad enough that Christians did it, but the thunderous silence from the Christian leaders as the world dumps all the blame on the Jews is truly anti-Semitic.

Since the Phalange is made up mostly of Christians who owe obedience to the Pope, perhaps he can take time off from having his picture taken to lay Lebanon under the Interdict until the Christian community hands over the murderers for judgment. . . .

[Reverend] WILLIAM A. COLLINS
Toronto, Ontario

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was writing a letter to COMMENTARY to extol Norman Podhoretz's "J'Accuse" and Ruth R. Wisse's earlier piece, "The Delegitimation of Israel" [July], both overdue and sorely needed rebuttals of Israel's vicious and unrelenting detractors, when the news about the Beirut massacre broke and gave rise to renewed Jewish self-flagellation. . . .

I am ashamed because my first reaction to the news of the massacre was not compassion for the victims, or sympathy for the terrible fear of their last moments. . . . My first worry was, "What will the Gentiles say?"

This reaction . . . was the product of a siege mentality under which supporters of Israel have been living for too long a time. . . . It seems that Israel cannot do anything right any more. Even when it destroyed the academies of international terrorism in southern Lebanon, even as it gave Lebanese sovereignty a new lease on life, there was no nod of recognition. Israel's detractors include the most improbable extremes: oil wealth and radical chic, mature liberation theologians and adolescent swastika-daubers, liberal academics and primitive hate-mongers.

The anti-Semitism of the one side is being supplemented by the Jewish self-hatred of the other. Anthony Lewis invokes "Zionism" . . . to imply that "real" Zionists would have fought the PLO with plowshares and pruning hooks. It is true, things might be a bit easier if Menachem Begin were to speak English like Abba Eban and look like Paul Newman. But the Anthony Lewises and Stanley Hoffmanns don't excoriate Israel for what it does, but because it is. They have considered Zionism at best a parochial and wasteful distraction from their own universalist utopias. Once Israel emerged in spite of them and became, for some time at least, a respectable and respected success story, they relented for a while. But deep in their hearts they have never forgiven Zionism for achieving its goal. . . . Bending over backward to prove that, though Jewish, they are not partial to Israel, their first concern is with establishing their alibi. And what better alibi is there than joining the anti-Israel slander?

BENNO WEISER VARON
Brookline, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

A general amen to Norman Podhoretz's piece. What is most appropriate about it—paralleling what is most pertinent about Israel's current actions—is that it is not an apologetic defense but a pointed counterattack.

Historically, Jewish weakness came to be associated with emphasis on justice, rationality, and constraint. The inability, then reluctance, to use force locked in the perception, both Jewish and non-Jewish, that force could not or would not be used. Enemies of Jews could make manipulative appeals to morality to discount the presence of Jewish power. The Lebanese war, for all its pain and suffering, has had the salutary effect of clearing the air of the belief that Israel could not and would not employ power commensurate with its ability. The long-term geopolitical gain is likely (but not certain) to offset short-term propaganda losses.

Israel's neighbors have not accorded it the right to exist. The denial of this right, when one has the power and capacity to exist, should properly—nay, morally!—produce not plaintive appeals for recognition but an explosive affirmation of being. That is what the Lebanese war is about. Israel's previous wars were indeed more "moral"—more narrowly righteous and just—than this one. They were fights for mere survival and there were no alternatives available. The choices this time have been freer, more extensive in scope, and hence more morally ambiguous. Surely some decisions have been dubious, tainted, ill-advised. But such is the way with free choices, and they have been properly accompanied by qualms, divisions, and uncertainties within the Jewish community. But the right to take calculated risks and to make tragic choices (and not merely to respond to pressure and manipulation) belongs to any individual and to any nation. If Israel fought only to exist, and not to prevail, then in some future war which was not of its choosing it would surely cease to exist. . . .

The irony of the situation is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We're doing what has to be done.

Danger– Handle With Care!

Love Canal dramatized the dangers of hazardous wastes. Business, government, and the insurance industry are showing that today's dumps need not be tomorrow's disasters.

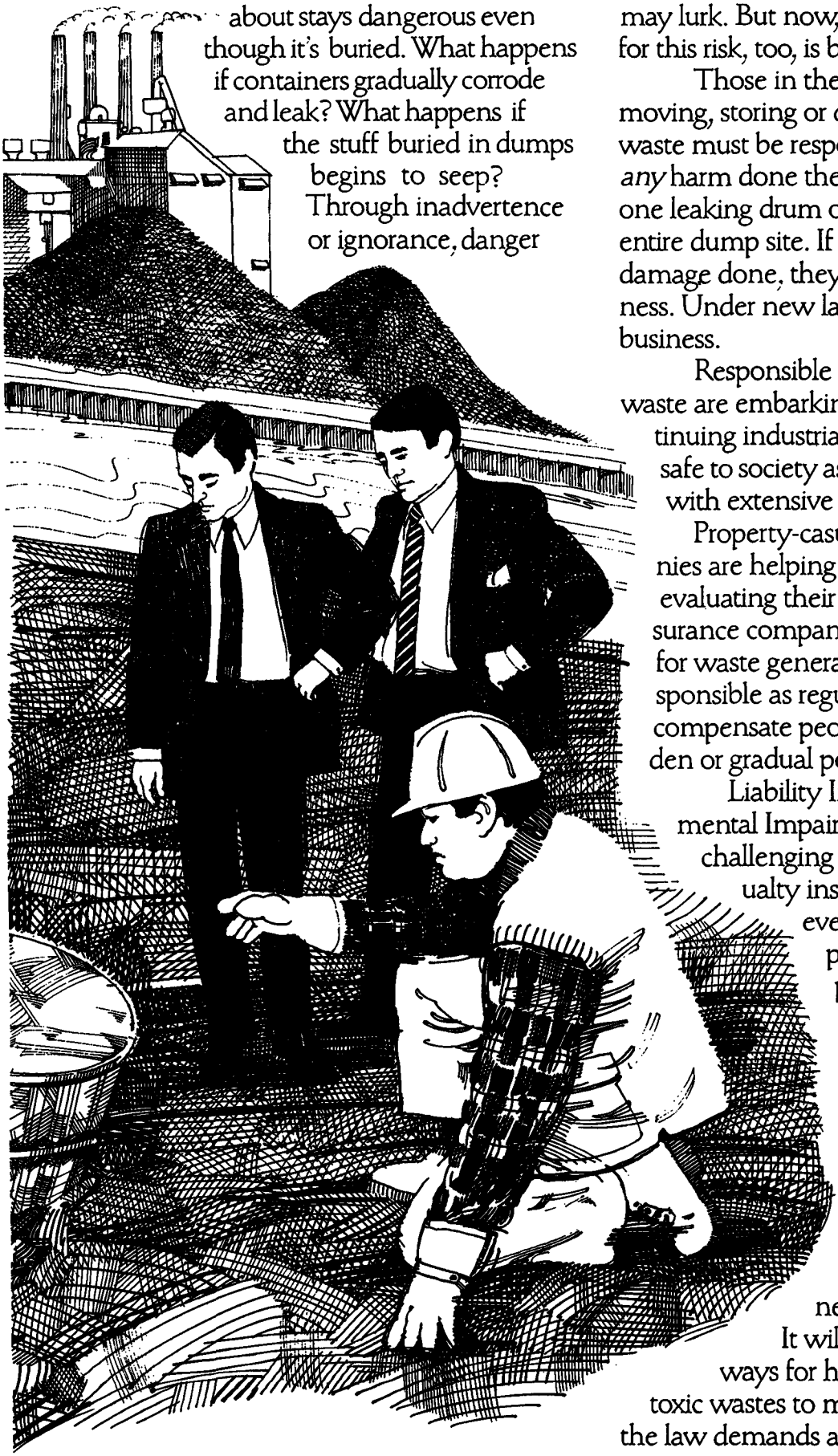
In a modern, heavily-industrialized society, waste materials are abundant and, in some cases, dangerous. Toxic leftovers from many industrial processes can pollute the environment, contaminate the water, and threaten the public safety. And, let's face it, serious accidents have occurred.

Today, the combined efforts of legislators, regulators, responsible waste-generating companies, the insurance business, and a concerned public are being felt.

New laws and standards go a long way toward making sure that firms that produce, move, store, or dispose of dangerous substances do so with care. Government tests and inspections are meant to assure compliance and minimize risk. Concerned industries have developed new technology and methods for safe waste disposal. But with materials this potentially dangerous, the best of care may not prevent every accident.

Although any accident with hazardous substances is bad news, some accidents are worse than others. And more insidious. Sudden spills and fires are quickly found and remedies quickly applied. Liability insurance for those accidents has been available for some time. But the material we're talking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



about stays dangerous even though it's buried. What happens if containers gradually corrode and leak? What happens if the stuff buried in dumps begins to seep? Through inadvertence or ignorance, danger may lurk. But now, liability insurance for this risk, too, is becoming available.

Those in the business of producing, moving, storing or disposing of dangerous waste must be responsible to the public for *any* harm done them—sudden or gradual—one leaking drum or the slow leaking of an entire dump site. If they can't pay for the damage done, they shouldn't be in the business. Under new law, they *can't* be in the business.

Responsible handlers of hazardous waste are embarking on a difficult path—continuing industrial activity in a manner as safe to society as possible and in compliance with extensive governmental regulation.

Property-casualty insurance companies are helping those waste generators by evaluating their risk potential. And now, insurance companies have devised a way for waste generators to be financially responsible as regulations require, able to compensate people harmed by either sudden or gradual pollution.

Liability Insurance for Environmental Impairment is one of the most challenging coverages property-casualty insurance companies have ever been asked to provide. The potential for loss to both people and property is large and little known. But if proper safety standards are issued and enforced by either federal or state government, and if insurance companies are allowed to administer the coverage with some sense of certainty, this new insurance can do a job.

It will be one of the best ways for handlers and disposers of toxic wastes to meet the responsibility that the law demands and the public deserves.

We're working to keep insurance affordable.

This message presented by the **American Insurance Association,** 85 John Street, New York, NY 10038

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the cowering, peace-loving West is now the "Jew" to the totalitarian East. Europe in particular is being manipulated to its own destruction by its pacifism and by its readiness to "assimilate" needlessly to a ruthless threat. So the West turns ferociously against part of itself, against Israel, by reawakening the anti-Semitism that is always a misguided substitute for lack of self-respect. . . . Mr. Podhoretz, taking the larger view (which is not likely to be altered by ongoing events or media distortions of them), has put the blame where it belongs.

MORRIS GROSSMAN
Fairfield University
Fairfield, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"J'Accuse" is such a magnificent, impassioned bull's-eye that I feel I must express my unbounded admiration and gratitude. I would, however—at the risk of nitpicking—take issue with Norman Podhoretz's remarks on Israel's 1956 war.

The 1956 Sinai campaign was precipitated by incessant attacks on Negev settlements by one of the PLO's former incarnations, the Fedayeen. The situation in the Negev then was quite similar to the pre-June 1982 conditions in the Galilee, and the Israeli campaign was just as defensive in purpose as the present Lebanese campaign. I don't believe, therefore, that the epithets "expansionism" and "imperialism" could apply, however "remotely," as Mr. Podhoretz suggests, any more than they do now. Ben-Gurion did not feel that eight-year-old Israel could "go it alone," and—since Britain and France were interested in returning the Suez to Western control—he coordinated the campaign with them, the added incentive being that, had they achieved their objectives, the Suez would have been opened to Israeli navigation.

But while the structure and purpose of the 1956 episode were similar to those of the present war, the reaction of the Left was dramatically different: with few exceptions it was pro-Israel. There are undoubtedly many reasons for the change since then, not the least of which is the general post-Vietnam malaise. But I believe the main reason is that in '56 the Arabs had not yet caught on to the "liberation-movement" gimmick and its concomitant automatic Soviet sponsorship, knee-jerk "liberal" support, and mindless media romanticization. In the 50's the "Palestinian guerrillas" were still seen for what they were (and, indeed, are): a mercenary foreign legion of the Arab League, of which only a minority is of Palestinian origin and whose main function is to terrorize the Israeli population between "official" Arab-Israeli wars. Their irregular status enabled the Arab governments to disclaim responsibility for their actions, thus enjoying relative immunity from Israeli attacks, while Israel has had to remain on nerve-racking, costly, and bloodsoaked alert throughout its existence. No other country would have been expected to tolerate a situation of this sort.

Finally, I am constantly puzzled by the failure of Israel's advocates to mention a simple, internationally recognized fact of life: every country fighting a defensive war is entitled to keep territory from which it was attacked. Otherwise, if returning to the status quo ante bellum were obligatory, there would be no disincentive for any political aggressor. After World War II, the USSR, whose strategic depth is the greatest in the world, made border adjustments that displaced 14 million people and annexed vast territories to the Soviet land mass. Even Russia's staunchest enemies do not advocate the return, for instance, of East Prussia to Germany. To deny Israel, whose strategic depth is among the tiniest in the world, the right to annex the Golan or East Jerusalem, after 34 years of war and adamant Syrian and Jordanian refusal to come to the negotiating table, is a prime example of a pernicious double standard.

DAVID BAR-ILLAN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In view of President Reagan's September 1 call for the association of the West Bank and Gaza with Jordan, the suggestion of Norman Podhoretz that Israeli public opinion will not tolerate Israel's absorption of the West Bank takes on special significance. I wonder if administration officials might have chosen to focus on that point in Mr. Podhoretz's perceptive review of media coverage of the Israeli operation in Lebanon and ignore (if not seek to prove to the contrary) his further observation: "No one can say what the eventual disposition of the West Bank will be." Clearly the President has said so, and he has gotten his good notices from columnists and papers like the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* who find little else to support in the Reagan foreign policy.

I am glad that Mr. Podhoretz's perceptive article is now on record but have little expectation that it will have much effect on the White House, now that the President has spoken—echoing the State Department's view in 1948 that Arab Palestine should be part of Jordan—and a Society of American Jews for the Front Page of the New York *Times* seems to have been formed. It appears that the administration is intent upon out-Cartering Carter in obtaining the removal of Prime Minister Begin, notwithstanding polls indicating scant support for the most prominent members of the Labor opposition, Messrs. Rabin and Peres. And now that the President has surrounded himself with latter-day Loy Hendersons and Robert Lovetts, it is to be expected that the coming months will be a bully time in Washington for scapegoating Israel and those Americans who believe that imposition of rejectionist terms on Israel is not a sound approach to peace between Israel and the Arab world.

The New York *Times* seems intent upon pursuing its double-standard perception of Israel. A September 8 editorial dismissed as "disingenuous propaganda" Israel's concern that the Reagan initiative (less a "fresh start" and more an Arabist retread) will lead to a Soviet base on the West Bank. The paper indicated that Israel could always move in and wipe out such a base. Who is being disingenuous? Washington and the media would pounce on Israel in outrage for such a move. (And, considering the lives that Israel would lose in such an operation, it would seem that the New York *Times* is fully prepared to have Israel pay in blood for the miscalculations of U.S. "peace" initiatives.) There is, further, little reason to be reassured by White House opposition to the dismantling of existing Jewish settlements on the West Bank. Withdrawal of an Israeli military presence on the West Bank will spur the Arabs to employ their own dismantlement plan.

I should not be surprised if Prime Minister Begin has concluded from the Reagan initiative that the Arabists have regained full control of our policy toward the Arab-Israel war, a policy more than 34 years old that confers on the Arab rejectionists "no-risk" belligerency. How long until the Arabists convince the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

President that the Begin government is unfriendly (the Reagan speech supported the territorial integrity of only "friendly states") and dust off the 1948-49 U.S. demands that Israel withdraw from the Negev, thereby providing a contiguous link between the West Bank and Gaza?

I fear that Mr. Podhoretz will have ample cause to write a "J'Accuse II" in the months ahead.

DAVID R. ZUKERMAN
Bronx, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's article articulated the concerns of many of us who have felt the anti-Semitic animus behind much vitriolic criticism of Israel and have tried to separate for ourselves that which was tainted from that which came from unexceptionable sources. The massacre in the Beirut camps has only made such analysis more necessary. . . .

Let me suggest that some of the attitudes as well as the silence of many Jews result not just from shame, but from a deep fear that has sprung up in each of us as we have caught the whirlwind of world rage and sensed the surfacing of old hatreds that had been impermissible in public discourse for the past forty years.

I hope these perceptions are wrong, and they are surely hard to document. But each day brings events that astonish even those who felt that anti-Semitism remained with us like certain disease organisms that may be present in a large portion of the population without symptom until a series of physiological events turns the bacteria virulent. What is one to say about the motives of the Jewish lawyer quoted in *Time* who felt compelled to rise at a political meeting and state that as a lifelong supporter of Israel "by every means imaginable" he now felt we should cut off "arms and monetary benefits"? Does anyone so connected with Israel not know that only such arms and aid prevent a similar massacre of three million Israeli Jews? . . .

Another shock came in a *Wall Street Journal* article by the much admired Vermont Royster. He had completely misread "J'Accuse" and described it as calling "all criticism of Israel anti-Semitic." . . . His major point follows and is menacing: if the American public ever perceives that its Jewish citizens take such an attitude (i.e., his erroneous belief that Mr. Podhoretz had called all criticism of Israel anti-Semitic), "then—and only then—do we really stand in danger of anti-Semitism." What is one to think when one is warned of the anti-Semitic consequences of an analysis of critics of Israel that was never made, nor has ever been made by any responsible Jewish source? . . .

M. DONALD COLEMAN, M.D.
Mamaroneck, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Please permit an unimportant elderly man to express his heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Norman Podhoretz for his extraordinarily perceptive and marvelously written article. It has thoroughly discredited the . . . errors of fact and logic of such as George W. Ball, Anthony Lewis, Joseph C. Harsch, and Mary McGrory. There remains, however, another kind of problem, more difficult to counter, because the lies and lunacies are oral, spouted on television news shows. Because they are not challenged by TV journalists, they are probably accepted as truth by many viewers.

Let me cite three or four instances:

1. One morning (September 15) I turned on the CBS Morning News, just as a prelate from Philadelphia was telling the anchor, Bill Kurtis, that the Pope was meeting with Arafat because the Pope was "a man of peace, who believed in peace by negotiation" . . . whereas Israel believed in "peace by force." Kurtis politely thanked the prelate and, after reminding the viewers that he and the prelate would speak about Grace Kelly soon, cut to a paid commercial.

2. About a month earlier, on the same program, George W. Ball appeared to plug his latest book. After treating him with fawning deference, Diane Sawyer (anchor) asked Ball if he wanted to say anything about Israel. . . . Ball went on to make manifest his present stage of *dementia messianica*: he told the world that we must save Reagan from "being an agent of Begin." Miss Sawyer thanked Ball with a smile and cut to a paid commercial.

3. The PBS station in Boston,

Speak Hebrew like a diplomat!

What sort of people need to learn a foreign language as quickly and effectively as possible? *Foreign Service personnel*, that's who. Members of America's diplomatic corps are assigned to U.S. embassies abroad, where they must be able to converse fluently in every situation.

Now, you can learn to speak Hebrew just as these diplomatic personnel do—with the Foreign Service Institute's Hebrew course.

This course is designed to teach you to speak and read modern Hebrew. It is not intended as a text for the study of the Bible or other Hebrew literature. The course teaches an easy, unaccented, conversational language with emphasis on spoken Hebrew, although reading and writing skills are acquired as study progresses.

The course turns your cassette player into a "teaching machine." It starts by training you in the sounds and pronunciation of Hebrew. In subsequent lessons the method of instruction incorporates guided imitation, repetition, memorization, pattern and response drills, and conversation. You set your own pace—testing yourself, correcting errors, reinforcing accurate responses. The accompanying text includes a 15 page glossary and a section on the Hebrew alphabet.

The sounds of modern Hebrew are relatively easy for Americans to learn. With the advantage of hearing a native speaking Hebrew on tape, and the ability to rewind your cassette for review, you learn the language as spoken today at your convenience and at your own speed.

☐ Hebrew 24 cassettes (38 hr.), plus plus 552-page text. All for $185.00.

(Conn. and N.Y. residents add sales tax.)

TO ORDER BY PHONE, PLEASE CALL TOLL-FREE NUMBER: 1-800-243-1234.

TO ORDER, JUST CLIP THIS AD and mail with your name and address, and a check or money order. Or charge to your credit card (American Express, VISA, MasterCard, Diners Club) by enclosing card number, expiration date, and your signature.

The Foreign Service Institute's Hebrew course is unconditionally guaranteed. Try it for three weeks. If you are not convinced it's the fastest, easiest, most painless way to learn Hebrew, return it and we will refund every penny you paid. Order today!

81 courses in 26 other languages also available. Write us for free catalog. Our 10th year.

Audio-Forum
Suite 36-B
On-The-Green
Guilford, CT 06437
(203) 453-9794

AUDIO-FORUM®

Or visit our New York sales office: 145 E. 49th St., New York, N.Y. 10017 (212) 753-1783

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WGBH, Channel 2, has a 10 P.M. news program, with Christopher Lydon, a former New York *Times* writer, as anchor. The two times I turned on the program during the Israel-PLO war, Lydon's guest "analyst" was Anthony Lewis. Need Lewis's position be stated here? The program's discussion of the terrorist attacks in France featured as guest "analyst" Stanley Hoffmann, who was said to be an expert on France and a Harvard professor. I still don't believe it. For Mr. Hoffmann there has been no such thing as French anti-Semitism since the end of World War II; the PLO could not have been involved in the terrorism because there had also been an attempt in Paris on a PLO official's life; the several "anti-Semitic" attacks are not Nazi-like for, apart from the attempt on the PLO man, there was also an attempt on some Turkish official. I turned off the set, grateful that Mr. Hoffmann was not a Harvard "expert" on Germany, for then he would have told the viewers that we should not single out the Jews as genocidal victims of the Nazis, for after all, didn't somebody also kill Ernst Roehm?

So how do we fight against the ephemeral words spoken by men and women in high places . . . whose status probably intimidates the ordinary TV interviewer, and influences the TV viewer who has never heard of COMMENTARY, much less read it? . . .

BERNARD ADELMAN
Winthrop, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's anger at the dishonesty and viciousness of Israel's media enemies is refreshing compared to the carefully modulated apologetics of so much Jewish writing. . . .

[But] I cannot understand Mr. Podhoretz's neglect of Georgie Ann Geyer. Though she was always an anti-Zionist, Miss Geyer's articles in the Los Angeles *Times* since Lebanon have become wild, the accusations leveled against Israel and the language employed often literally hysterical. Miss Geyer ranks with . . . Nicholas von Hoffman for sheer depth of hostility toward Israel, a nation which, to her, deserves no quarter but only relentless attack, on all issues, at all times, in the most intemperate language. For the Jewish reader the columns of these two can approach an experience of violence. . . .

Mr. Podhoretz has also been much too gentle with black commentators and columnists. He gives us no sense of the near universality of black opinion leaders' hostility toward Israel, or of its vehemence. This is a serious lapse; the Jewish public has a right to know, even if the knowledge further aggravates black-Jewish tensions. . . .

Lastly, and worst, the article manages to ignore television. While the three network news departments, with . . . CBS well in the lead, have declared war on Israel, . . . Mr. Podhoretz does battle with the *Village Voice*, a little rag of no significance beyond Manhattan and the New York area college campuses. . . .

I would hope Mr. Podhoretz gives us a second installment of "J'Accuse," this time dealing exclusively with the networks, naming names both on- and off-camera, citing examples of gross bias. . . . This would be a most important and useful article. . . .

BRUCE J. SCHNEIDER
Costa Mesa, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Israel's bitter critics, who hide behind sanctimonious protestations of deep concern and "friendship," call to mind an incisive comment H.L. Mencken made many years ago about some of his fellow journalists: "They come in as newspaper men, trained to get the news and eager to get it. They end as tin-horn statesmen, full of dark secrets and unable to write the truth if they tried."

JULES D'ARNCOURT
Rockville, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I could not agree more with Norman Podhoretz's spirited defense of Israel from the attacks of George W. Ball, Anthony Lewis, Alfred Friendly, Nicholas von Hoffman, Hodding Carter, Mary McGrory, Joseph C. Harsch, and all the others mentioned in "J'Accuse." But I think his conclusion that all of these people suffer from the disease of anti-Semitism is a misdiagnosis. I submit that their disease is modern American liberalism.

These people have the same prescription for Israel as they had for the U.S. in Southeast Asia, for the people of Nicaragua and El Salvador, and for the Shah of Iran: give in and share power with those among you who claim to be "oppressed," particularly if the claim is pressed violently. These "oppressed" people are the wave of the future and will ultimately triumph, so let them in now while there is time and opportunity to moderate their claims.

This is the same liberal dogma which, domestically, blames the victim of crime rather than the criminal. The idea is that because society spends too little on housing, welfare, job training, etc., the "oppressed" turn to crime, and who can blame them? Liberals, particularly affluent and successful ones, love to publicize their "compassion," presumably to assuage their guilt at being better off than their fellow men. Who could blame Yasir Arafat for hiding behind the innocent people of Beirut? Not the American liberal. The fault must lie with Israel, which denied him that which he covets. All this has nothing to do with anti-Semitism or "anti-Jewism," but is simply liberal guilt. . . .

B.J. SADOFF, JR.
Rockville, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"J'Accuse" is excellent. I was particularly struck by Norman Podhoretz's remark, at the end, that "Israel is a light unto other peoples who have come to believe that nothing is worth fighting or dying for." True, but Israel is now also an offense to these same people because they believe that there is nothing which we have worth defending if it means *taking* lives. The civilian casualties were especially crucial in this equation. Many Americans, who would have identified themselves as admirers of Israel in the easy days of peace, refuse to be a party to this or any other conflict, thinking that America and Israel and the West have little worth killing for, even in self-defense. The experience of Vietnam is still decisive for this feeling, and there is an unseemly tendency to exaggerate civilian casualties in order to justify the feeling.

I believe Mr. Podhoretz is on the mark when he writes that at issue are the principles of Western civilization. But how does this persuade those who think these principles—about which there is endless confusion and controversy—have led to all manner of infamies, from poverty in the so-called Third World to a nuclear arms race? For too many, these principles are so cynically regarded that they would hardly be acceptable as the constituents of a fighting faith; indeed,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that they would lead some to fight when taken seriously is grounds for rejecting them. . . .

BILL JOHNSTON, JR.
Wallingford, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Norman Podhoretz attributes anti-Zionism mainly to anti-Semitism and secondarily to the Left's animus against the West. No doubt there is an anti-Semitic component involved in the new tilt toward the Arabs, but as a conservative devoted to the cause of Israel and its role in the defense of the West, I must painfully admit that anti-Semitism is a fixation more common on the Right than on the Left. Other follies are at work among "progressives" like Nicholas von Hoffman and Anthony Lewis. Mr. Podhoretz exposes these follies toward the end of his article, but the thrust of his analysis does not give them the central role they deserve.

Pacifism and Third World romanticism are the sacred idols of the Left which Israel has sinned against. Of course not all the anti-Zionists whom Mr. Podhoretz confronts would accept the pacifist label. Most fancy themselves "realists" and, if pressed, would acknowledge a legitimate role for military force *in the abstract*. But any actual use of it by a Western power is sure to provoke their savage indignation. And by a perverse irony, the very justice and moderation of Israel's use of military force provoke the most virulent pacifist rage. If there is anything a pacifist hates more than an unjust war it's a just war, since recognition of the latter threatens the underpinnings of the faith. . . .

The second tenet of the Left flaunted by Israel is the notion of the Third World as the last repository of human virtue. . . . Despite its large population of immigrants from Africa and Asia, Israel is perceived (on the whole, rightly) as a society of European origin and values. Its nationalism is therefore "reactionary," while that of the Palestinians is "progressive." Worse still, Israel's very success at nation-building has robbed it of the glamor of underdevelopment. In its early years, when it was peopled largely by concentration-camp survivors, . . . right-thinking liberals could accord it some sympathy. But now that it has become a prosperous modern society it can be presumed to be crass, if not downright evil. Success—their own, their society's—makes liberals squirm.

In short, Israel transgresses against two potent fetishes of the modern liberal mind. I believe this is enough to explain the extremity of the Left's reaction to the invasion of Lebanon, without the need to posit anti-Semitism. . . .

JEFF ALSDORF
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz blames the hostilities against Israel on anti-Semitism. There may be an even deeper motive that underlies recent anti-Israel sentiments. I have in mind the extreme altruism of most contemporary intellectuals. Self-defense, even of the collective sort that Jews are now intent on carrying out, is frowned upon. One is obligated to give all benefit of doubt to others, even one's mortal enemies. If someone is attacked and the response endangers others, the response, not the original attack, is called into question.

I am no expert on who is at fault in the Middle East, but I do know that any assertiveness on one's own behalf, as apparently exhibited by Israeli citizens, is held in contempt by most of the world, a world that believes turning the other cheek, sacrificing oneself, and similar modes of behavior are noble, while looking out for one's rightful interests is base.

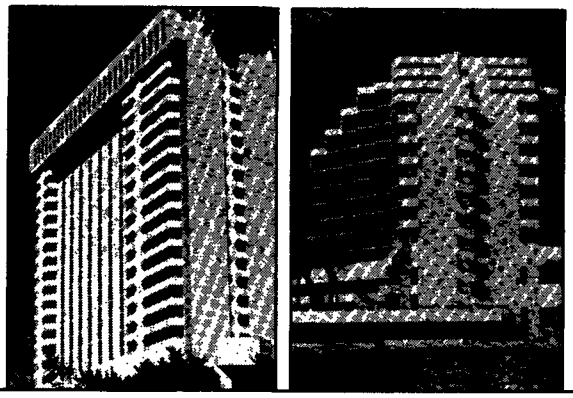
TIBOR R. MACHAN
SUNY-Fredonia
Fredonia, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am one of those who opposed the war in Vietnam and who nonetheless has been furious at media coverage of the Israeli action in Lebanon. As such, I commend Norman Podhoretz's "J'Accuse" and I agree that anti-Jewish sentiments are very much a factor here.

I believe, however, that Mr. Podhoretz's analysis misses a key point. . . . Central to leftist ideology is a need to dichotomize the world into victims and victimizers. . . . In the case of Vietnam, the Left identified the Vietnamese peasants as victims and the United States and its authoritarian allies as victimizers. Since I

EXHILARATION IN ISRAEL



Jerusalem and Tiberias. Two cities rich with three thousand years of history and the home of two smashingly sophisticated, ultra-modern Canadian Pacific Hotels. Soaring twenty-two stories above the lush gardens of Independence Park, CP Hotels Jerusalem Plaza overlooks the sacred Old City and Mount Scopus. Equally spectacular is the view from our Tiberias Plaza, perched on the ancient Sea-of-Galilee. Come to Israel and experience the contrasts at CP Hotels. They're positively exhilarating.

Toll-Free Reservations: 1-800-828-7447
In New York State: 1-800-462-7472
Or Your Travel Agent

CP Hotels
Canadian Pacific Hotels

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

always regarded the Vietcong, at best, as equal victimizers, I did not welcome their victory. . . .

In the present instance, a lengthy propaganda campaign has successfully portrayed the Palestinians as victims deprived of their "homeland." Further, they are Third World people, an authorized victim class. Israel has been too successful to be regarded as a victim; but, as we all know, the Left, in protesting the charge of anti-Semitism, continually asserts its support of Jews so long as they are victims.

As for the Lebanese, most people on the Left did not discover that they were victims of the Palestinians until they had already taken their position on the Israeli incursion. Many refused to absorb the new information. . . .

It should be noted that the function of ideology is to simplify one's world so that one can cope with it. While the victimizer-victim dichotomy is a particular leftist contribution (with or without Marx), a good guy-bad guy dichotomy is as old as time and has appeal to all.

WILLIAM A. BAKER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is a lesson to be learned from the massacre in Lebanon. In the weeks following the massacre much sharp criticism was heaped on Israel for the negligence on its part which allowed the Phalange to kill so many Palestinians. This criticism points out that those who go back on even implied commitments (as the Israeli entry to West Beirut implied a commitment to the safety of the residents of the entered area) are guilty of the results of their infidelity.

The American Left was instrumental in forcing the United States to abandon its commitment to South Vietnam. The results of the untimely American withdrawal are constantly becoming clearer as people like Doan Van Toai and other former supporters of the North Vietnamese victory make their difficult escape to the West. Their stories of the horrors inside Vietnam and the fact that over 500,000 Vietnamese have felt conditions at home sufficiently bad to warrant the huge risks involved in escaping their homes show what the results of American unwillingness to fulfill its commitments have been.

The issue of whether we should have been in Vietnam in the first place is irrelevant. The fact is that a commitment *was* made and that those responsible for our reneging on that commitment share in the responsibility for the resulting events. By emphasizing the guilt of Israel for the deaths in Sabra and Shatila, those of the American Left whose protests were instrumental in our withdrawal from Vietnam, especially those who protested despite evidence of what could follow, are admitting their own guilt. The realization of this guilt should make them a bit slower to abandon commitments in a future where North Vietnams or Phalangist militias loom large.

ALEXANDER L. SINGER
London, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There are several valid points made in Norman Podhoretz's brilliant polemic defending Israel, particularly the charge that most opponents of Israel's invasion of Lebanon are reacting on the basis of a double standard. Mr. Podhoretz thinks this is anti-Semitism, but I think something else is to blame.

Just as many liberals . . . privately held blacks to be inferior, while publicly deploring racism, I think the same is true in the Middle East. Liberals often think differently in private from the way they speak in public. I believe that many liberal critics of Israel really believe the Arabs to be little better than savages, and simply don't expect anything better of them. The Israelis, on the other hand, are regarded as essentially civilized, and are held to what these critics take to be civilized standards.

Recently, I brought up the point about the double standard to one liberal friend, and the response was: "Of course the Arabs have been slaughtering each other for decades. What do you expect of them? But the Israelis are a different matter."

The issue, then, isn't anti-Semitism. It is the fact that many liberals are dishonest about their real views of Third World people, and privately hold them in contempt.

I, too, am very critical of Israel, and of its invasion of Lebanon. Its existence was not threatened, no serious PLO violations of the cease-fire had occurred, and it was simply not necessary. But I hold the other nations of the area, and the world, to the same libertarian standards. And on those grounds, one is forced to declare that many of them, if not most, are far worse, at least in how they treat their own people. That, however, excuses precisely nothing.

ROY A. CHILDS, JR.
Cato Institute
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . It is misleading to impute "mere" anti-Semitism to the motives of Anthony Lewis, Mary McGrory, *et al.* since it implies that anti-Semitism is the exclusive source of their maunderings. . . . One need only review their public stances on such varied topics as our involvement in Vietnam and El Salvador, pipeline sanctions, CIA abuses, Jonas Savimbi, the "Iron Triangle," the "excesses of Solidarity," etc. to perceive an animus much deeper than anti-Semitism alone. It is, of course, inevitable that such anti-Western bias should rear its ugly head as anti-Semitism . . . since Judaism is the rock upon which Christianity and Western values are founded.

It is, however, not merely shortsighted to write off the Left's reaction to Lebanon as anti-Semitism, but also politically unwise. Such a charge could appear to non-Jews as petulant, self-serving, and possibly absurd (given the high visibility of Jewish leftists screaming "Nazi!" at Begin). . . .

If the animus underlying the subversive attacks on Western willpower is misidentified by the defenders of the West as a parochial bias against Jews only, neither Western nor Jewish interests are well served.

F. W. MEEKER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . More widespread than anti-Semitism, even more pervasive than a lack of faith in American power among journalists and foreign-affairs commentators, is self-love, or rather a passion for what one has already written. Ever since 1967, and most especially since 1973, the majority of journalists covering the Middle East have adopted an anti-Israel stance. The press loves the underdog and the Jewish state no longer merited this love, for it had defeated its enemies soundly and taken some of their territory and ruled over their people. . . . Not even the Camp David accords and the return of the Sinai could change the picture being painted. It was Sadat, not Begin, who showed true statesmanship; it was Egypt (which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gained everything), which was to be praised, not Israel which gave back thrice-conquered strategically valuable territory and was compelled to remove its own settlers by force. . . .

Then came Lebanon. Was the press now to change its image of the Jewish state? Was all that intellectual baggage to be thrown out by regarding the invasion as a justified act of self-defense, which any other nation would have taken years ago? Impossible. For Israel's attack upon the PLO only proved and validated everything that had been written. Here was proof positive that the Jewish state had lost its soul to militarism.

This explains the distorted accounts of civilian deaths and why journalists printed words and pictures without checking the facts. The facts told a different story, not only about the invasion itself, but different from everything they had been writing for over a decade. The PLO was massing a military force capable of threatening Israel and using Lebanon as a safe haven. The arms in its possession were Soviet and they were bought with Arab oil money.... Most importantly, the facts told of an Israeli army which took care not to kill civilians and which, at considerable risk to itself, sought to distinguish between PLO fighters and noncombatants.

These facts could not be elaborated by those who had invested years telling the world the contrary. It was too much to expect . . . them to admit that they had been wrong. Indeed, in a sinister way, I think they were almost happy to see Israeli tanks push to the gates of West Beirut. In their joyous celebration of themselves and what they had written, they were blinded to the reality which made a lie of their misbegotten labors.

JOEL J. SOKOLSKY
School of Advanced
International Studies
Johns Hopkins University
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Norman Podhoretz writes that anti-Semitism is principally responsible for the double standard concerning Israel which has appeared these last months. Although I have no doubt that it does play a part, I think there is another reason, more deeply rooted in the development of public opinion about that country. Except for some ardent Zionists, who are reluctant to attribute their success to external factors, few will deny that the creation of the state of Israel was largely due to a widespread feeling of guilt over the Holocaust. Not only the existence of the country itself but also its policies were, thereafter, associated with the Jewish victims of Nazism. For this very reason, critics have had to be cautious lest they be accused of anti-Semitism.

This has been true until now. During the last war, however, all those who had grievances against Israel seem to have felt that it was time to free themselves from the restrictions imposed by memories of the Holocaust. This could be done only if Israel became guilty of a crime as great as the one which legitimized it. Therefore, we have heard the word "genocide" and "Hitler" in connection with the war, although, of course, there is no similarity. . . .

Mr. Podhoretz deplores, and rightly so, the double standard which governs attitudes toward the Middle East. Yet those who invoke it ought to be taken seriously—not for the veracity of their judgments, but because they represent a feeling which could be damaging to Israel. No one can deny that Israel needs American support, . . . which depends on the sentiments of the public. . . . Israel ought to guard against being seen as an oppressor. . . .

E. JEROME BENVENISTE
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Norman Podhoretz says that "Historically anti-Semitism has taken the form of labeling certain vices and failings as specifically Jewish when they are in fact common to all humanity." Such a definition of anti-Semitism could have been accepted before Nazism and the Holocaust, but Nazism gave anti-Semitism a new dimension. The Nazis even persecuted Christians who happened to have had Jewish grandmothers. It was a state policy, not simply of discrimination but of extermination. An anti-Semite today cannot be unaware that this concept covers a crime without precedent in human history. . . . But if we refer only to the anti-Semitism of the type manifested in the Dreyfus affair, we are speaking of two different historical stages of this inhuman phenomenon.

Mr. Podhoretz also says that criticism of Israel that is "based on a double standard" is anti-Semitic. A double standard is naturally to be condemned as unfair or malignant, but to equate even unfair criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism plays down the evil of anti-Semitism; such a meaningless definition in fact "produces" anti-Semites and anti-Semitism.

Nazi anti-Semitism was not eliminated with the defeat of Nazism. It exists as state policy in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union has encouraged, supported, and was instrumental in the attempt of Nasser and his followers in Arab lands to exterminate the Jews in Israel. It organized anti-Semitic show trials, in which Zionism was identified with Nazism, to demonstrate that the Soviet Union was a reliable ally of the Arab enemies of Israel. As with Hitler, the anti-Semitism of the Soviets has an outspokenly imperialist character. . . .

The remarkable relationship of the United States to Israel is not an expression of philo-Semitism, and if a far less friendly relationship were to develop, it would not be the consequence of anti-Semitism.

All United States governments since the end of World War II have realized that the existence of Israel as a democratic nation, able and willing to build a modern democratic society and to defend it against all enemies, is in the basic interest of the United States. The U.S. knew that the Soviets originally approached Israel with an offer that Israel should become the USSR's power base in the Middle East and that the Israeli government refused. . . . Israel has remained the absolute and wholly dependable ally of the U.S. (I only wish that our European allies would follow Israel's example.)

But today we are witnessing a painful change in the relationship of the U.S. and Israel. I have the feeling that the United States government is more pro-Israel than Israel's present government is pro-American. In his recent speech in the Knesset, Ariel Sharon declared that Jerusalem is not Saigon, which was not meant to be a lecture in geography but a hint about American imperialism. In his official speeches Begin has mentioned a few times that Israel cannot be treated as a colony. What imperialist country was Begin referring to?

For the continuation, please turn to page 68

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AN EXCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMENTARY READERS

Give America's most influential magazine

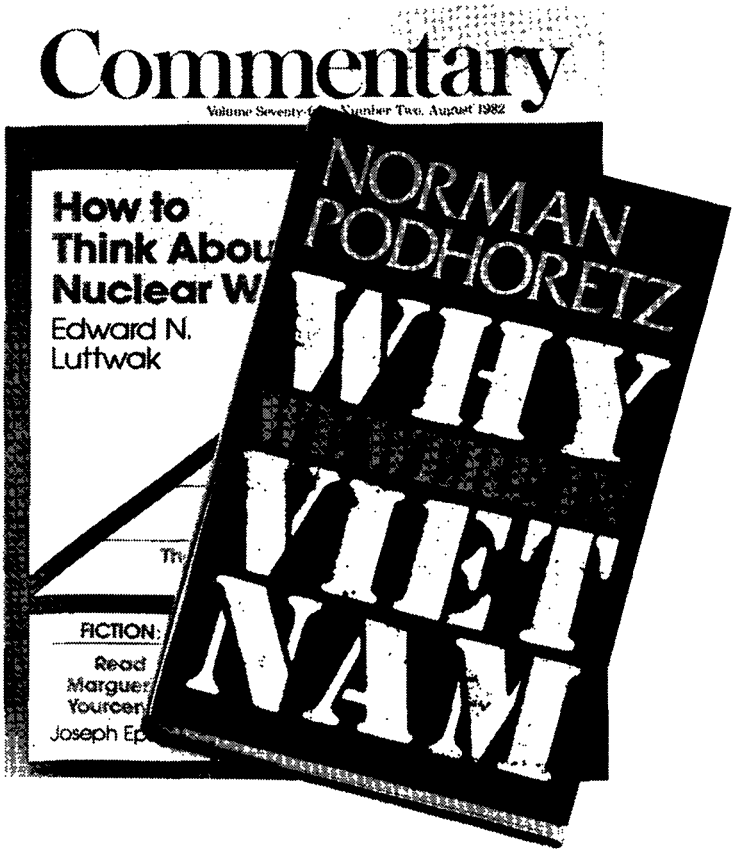
...and get one of the year's most explosive books, hand-signed by the author.

COMMENTARY. It's a holiday gift that always makes elegant sense. A gift that enables you to share a wealth of ideas that you care about...a gift that speaks volumes about your regard for the recipient ...and one that will keep on giving every month of the coming year.

But this holiday season, giving *Commentary* makes especially elegant sense. Because for each twelve-month subscription you order by December 31, we'll send *you* a gift of *Why We Were in Vietnam* —the new book by *Commentary* editor Norman Podhoretz that is raising controversy everywhere. (The lead editorial in The Wall Street Journal says "Norman Podhoretz has done it again, visiting an epidemic of apoplexy upon Manhattan's literary salons.")

Priced at $13.95 in bookstores, this hardcover book is yours—as our gift—when you give *Commentary.* And when you open your book to the title leaf, you'll find something important that's just for you, as a *Commentary* reader—the personally hand-inscribed signature of the author.

So go through your gift list now. Pick out the people with whom you want to share something special—and write their names on the attached order form. We'll rush each person a holiday card, announcing your year-round gift. And we'll send *you* an autographed gift book with every paid subscription. (So if you order more than one subscription you'll have additional books for holiday giving.) But remember, now is the time. This offer is good only until December 31st, 1982.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Banks, Tanks, and Freedom

John Van Meer

> Other [State Department] emergency teams have been known officially as "working groups" or "task forces." But the Poland group is known as a "*monitoring group.*" . . . The *new title* was deliberately adopted to leave the impression that the United States was approaching the crisis as a concerned but passive observer. . . . The other names, it was felt, tended to imply more than passivity.
>
> —New York *Times*, December 19, 1981

IF THE most recent suppression of the Polish nation has taught us little we did not know about totalitarianism, it has exposed much that we may have wanted to ignore about the dynamics of the dollar democracies. In the continuing example of Poland, the West is suffering one more rout of its moral, strategic, and political interests. The re-Stalinization of Poland gives the lie to a generation of policies and pieties about the East on which the West has banked.

Nowhere have the reigning confusions, self-delusions, and deceits about the meeting of East and West become more evident than in the recent "unpleasantness" over Poland's finances—more exactly, in the maneuverings of the Western banks that have allowed the tyranny of the debtor to replace the tyranny of police-state Communism as the key to Western calculations about the Soviet bloc. In the thinking of the banks—which AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland has christened "the soft underbelly of freedom"—we have the anchor of Western policy toward Poland and the bloc. Indeed, the saga of the Polish loans concerns very much more than money. It cuts to the heart of what a decade of détente, and the Polish "self-limiting revolution," are all about.

IN JANUARY 1981, the Polish regime for the first time disclosed its colossal indebtedness to the West. Of the nearly $30-billion total, roughly two-thirds is guaranteed by Western governments, principally European, with the remainder in unsecured private bank loans. As the Polish drama wore on, the albatross of the debt hovered over the intoxicating talk of liberty and the gains of the Solidarity movement. Yet from the beginning it was not entirely clear whose albatross it would turn out to be.

When in December 1981 the world's largest free trade union was subjugated by General Jaruzelski, the news was greeted with relief and hopefulness on Wall Street and in sister parishes. One prominent New York investment analyst voiced the representative belief that if General Jaruzelski's shock troops could suppress all strikes, the country's chances of default would decrease because Poles would after all be got back on the job. Said he: "If the Polish government is successful in gaining better control, or if the Russians take over, it will be unfortunate for the Polish people, but the loans will be paid off." Thomas Theobald, head of Citibank's international division, volunteered: "Who knows which political system works? The only test we care about is: can they pay their bills?"

But the martial-law economy confounded these analysts, achieving in its first two months a 30-40 percent drop in industrial production, far worse than the one workday per worker per year that had been lost to Solidarity strikes. Financial-industry spokesmen now began to take a larger view. Citibank chairman Walter Wriston argued on national television against declaring Poland in default: "Poland is a member of the Western area, [and] we have a chance of keeping it that way.... If someone were to call a default on that debt, you would then illustrate very clearly to the Poles that they had only one friend, which was Russia." Yet just how Poland or any Soviet satellite had drawn closer to the West after ten years of Western subsidy amounting to four times the size of the Marshall Plan, neither Wriston nor any adherent of his school was able to elaborate.

Reality persisting, some money men did acknowledge the sheer size of the credit that had been extended to Poland, and the fact that it had been granted on terms which would not have secured for a free-market client so much as a car loan. "Many loans were made on faith alone," confessed Merrill Lynch bank analyst James Wooten.

JOHN VAN MEER is the pseudonym of a young political commentator who has traveled extensively in the Soviet bloc. He writes on East-West affairs and subjects of related historical and political interest. This is his first appearance in COMMENTARY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As the negotiating terms offered by the Jaruzelski regime worsened, some professionals cloaked themselves in the hope that countries, unlike companies, simply do not go bankrupt. But a senior French banker who preferred to remain anonymous commented: "You've got to be cynical. Everyone knows Poland is in default. But if we say so, we admit that we're bad bankers who made loans we never should have made."

The winter weeks passed. The economy still slid precipitously, mocking the official pretext that martial law was a vital step to national recovery.* The only improving efficiency in Poland turned out to be that of the brutal ZOMO security forces, implementing a terror more severe in certain respects than that of the Stalin era. The vaunted Soviet "umbrella," which was ultimately to guarantee the risks of lending to members of the bloc, would not unfold.

But financial interests, clinging to an indefensible position, saw it diligently upheld by senior Western diplomats and cabinet officials. The then-Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Walter Stoessel, argued vigorously against a congressional attempt to call a Polish default. Default would spark panic among the Western allies, he said, and "would weaken the ability of the U.S. to respond to military repression in Poland" (as if the killings and beatings of defenseless citizens, the militarization of factories and schools, and the mass arrests did not yet constitute "military repression"). Further saving allied fire, Stoessel maintained that putting Poland in default would actually take the pressure *off* Warsaw, and limit future "maximum pressure" the West could exert.

Default, added then-Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, would "bring down the temple of Western unity." The Reagan administration (in addition to relatively mild sanctions) settled for an ad-hoc policy of jawboning the allies to restrict credit to the Soviet bloc. Jawboning is a technique for which the President has had scant respect when he has been serious about the domestic economy, and not surprisingly it has met with the cordial disdain of the allies, who can tell the difference between a large dog and its tail. Since the state of war commenced in Poland, billions of dollars in new credits have been granted the Soviet bloc.

BRILLIANTLY Orwellian as have been certain of Washington's rationales for avoiding the central financial issues at stake, they cannot disguise the policy that has been carried out under intense pressure from both European and American banks. This policy was engineered in secret expressly to avoid the default called for in the "tank clause," which had been inserted in the loan agreements to cover precisely the case of repression in Poland. The line administration bureaucrats would have preferred to keep hidden behind all their anti-Soviet rhetoric is the bottom line: the government-backed loans to Poland will be paid off as they fall due, with no questions asked of General Jaruzelski or Moscow. The "soft underbelly of freedom," exposed to view by an avowedly anti-Communist Presidency, requires that the insurance bill for Communist state power be bankrolled by the American taxpayer.

These particular fruits of détente have thus far totalled nearly a billion dollars (and counting), and promise to run to many more billions in the case of Poland alone (billed to all NATO taxpayers), as huge government-backed principal payments fall due over the next four years. Meanwhile, in the name of financial security (illusory) and allied unity (fictive), economic accommodationists argue for rescheduling, on unprecedentedly favorable terms, the staggering $14 billion in principal and interest payments that Poland owes the West for 1982 alone; extending still further commercial credits to avert default and "protect" old loans ($2.5 billion was sought and $6 billion needed just for 1982); admitting Poland to the International Monetary Fund and a consequent $5 billion credit line; and infusing massive aid and credits after the presumed thaw that will follow General Jaruzelski's understandably traumatic consolidation of power.

But even that greatest of bourgeois passions, to return to business as usual, cannot defy the present economic realities of the Soviet system. After the initial phase of "normalization" in Poland, Arthur Burns, U.S. Ambassador to Germany, reported from Bonn, the capital of economic détente: "Poland is bankrupt. Poland will never pay back its loans." In all but the technical sense Poland has been in default for some time. And the financial basis for the West's undeclared Marshall Plan to the East is now officially missing, if indeed it ever existed beyond the imaginings of selected architects of détente. "All this talk about the 'umbrella theory' was a primitive approach," Polish Deputy Finance Minister Zbigniew Karcz finally disclosed in late January. "It would be artificial and naive to expect the Soviet Union to cover a substantial part of our obligations on convertible currencies to Western countries and Western banks." Even the most assured accommodationists, as they learn what the détente dollars have actually been used for, are being forced to concede privately what anyone versed in Soviet imperial practice could have reported a decade ago: the loans are not coming back; the loans were never coming back.

Karcz's refreshingly frank comments are but the

* The regime's stated goal now is to boost the country's standard of living by 1984 to a level 30 percent *below* what it was in 1979. The joke in Poland used to be that Russians suffered even worse conditions because theirs was a more advanced form of socialism; but under the more intimate tutelage of experts from the East, Poland is rapidly catching up.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

public proclamation of long-standing attitudes of the regime toward its debt. In fact, Soviet umbrella or no, Poland's rulers never really had the intention of making good their obligations to the West. Zdzislaw Rurarz, principal economic adviser to ex-Prime Minister Gierek, has testified (since defecting to the West) to the laissez-faire approach adopted by Warsaw central planners toward the loans from the very outset. "Let the creditors worry about our debt," Rurarz reports the attitude of the regime. "We can accept almost any debt, and if we have trouble servicing that debt, let them worry. They will certainly be lending us money again." Those who have been close to the thinking of Poland's ruling class speak of the natural irresponsibility of enormously privileged party cadres which, purely out of self-interest, care not at all about the bourgeois morality of loan agreements. It is simply not in their economic interest, nor is it politically necessary as the West currently plays its hand, for Poland to do more than keep up a minimum flow of interest payments (still less than that since martial law) to hold the bankers at bay.

The disaster of the Western loans underscores the dangerous muddle to which our East-West professionals appear congenitally prone. For the bankers and diplomats fundamentally assumed that, on the one hand, the Soviet umbrella would cover all credit risk, but on the other, that the loans were somehow going to discrete economies that could in fact return capital investment. Just the reverse has proved true. Moscow's umbrella covers the use and control of Western capital in the bloc, but when interest and principal come due, Soviet satellites acquire a sudden financial autonomy. The "umbrella theory," a détente building block of characteristic wishfulness, has been fully collapsed by the Soviets themselves. When, in May 1981, a delegation of feckless American bankers (with the blessing of the State Department) journeyed to Moscow wanting to extend further credits to Poland, they were flatly refused their request for Soviet guarantees for these new loans.

In 1977, during the salad days of the détente-inspired debts, Polish non-government economists (who would become part of Solidarity's team of economic experts) warned visiting America financiers and diplomats about the folly of the loans. They urged a moratorium on further credits because the responsible officials were steadfastly refusing to account for their uses, and because the regime would in any event never meet its obligations to the West. These economists (some of them now in "detention centers," i.e., political prisons) argued that the loans merely had the effect of buying more time and luxuries for a hopelessly corrupt colonial regime, with the West receiving nothing in exchange.

The American dollar diplomats waved aside such objections, maintaining that the credits were essential to continued détente and would help purchase "the liberality of the Polish regime." Their long-suffering Polish interlocutors observed that new credits on old terms, far from liberalizing the regime, would do little more than subsidize its Stalinist faction, and that anyway Communists do not respect, and in fact privately despise, the capitalist who does not make good deals for himself. In 1981, top Solidarity advisers were arguing that any new Western loans to Poland be placed under "social control" by the nation (as opposed to "socialist control" by the regime). And shortly after the December 13, 1981 blitzkrieg came a last appeal to the West from a group of Solidarity activists: "Do not believe in the good sense of your bankers. They were sufficiently naive to place $29 billion of your money into the hands of a corrupted and incompetent regime."

Confirmation that Poland's ruling class is not to be bribed into political liberality by liberal Western credits is to be found repeatedly in the history of the loans. In 1976, while applying for a massive extension of its credit lines to the West, the authorities ruthlessly beat back popular demonstrations across Poland. Washington's summer 1981 advance of $600 million in grain credits (and similar aid from Western Europe), with a bigger aid package in the works, bought few human rights or lives come December. Some measure of the respect the Moscow-Warsaw axis has for this bedrock Western assumption about the political purchasing power of aid is evidenced in Poland's request, four days after the imposition of martial law, for $350 million in new credits in order to pay overdue interest for 1981. Last April, just as Polish negotiators were sitting down with British bankers to seek new loans and the postponement of all 1982 bank interest as well as principal, security troops reaffirmed the point by brutally renewing their attacks on the Polish citizenry. In the late summer, demonstrations in favor of (an already promised) popular dialogue were answered with the most systematic display of official force yet; within a fortnight, Western banks made their answer by consummating with Warsaw the most lenient debt-deferral agreement yet. In the face of a NATO agreement not to reschedule or even *discuss* the rescheduling of Poland's 1982 debt until martial law was lifted, and just as the regime was pursuing what is known in Poland as its "zero option" by formally outlawing Solidarity, the banks offered the unprecedented concession of a multiple-year rescheduling agreement (rather than the "counterproductive" annual negotiations), thereby giving the regime at least 3-4 years' extra breathing space. Thus in ruins lay the argument of the Reagan administration that the most effective response to the repression was to hold Poland to its current debt-repayment schedule.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The leverage that widening East-West economic relations were to bring has accumulated in a manner quite the opposite of that prophesied. The Western loans have in fact had virtually no demonstrable political value to the West *or* to the Polish people, only to the Moscow-Warsaw axis which has shattered at will both the economic and the political rationales for what was to be the model arena of East-West cooperation. Transitory gestures may come from the regime, but as for changes that would signify real liberalization, Poland's rulers are not having any. The systematic destruction of the Solidarity union remains the chief object, and national product, of the Jaruzelski regime.

IN ATTEMPTING to move Poland toward a self-organized economy, Solidarity during its sixteen months of open life raised many questions deeply vexing to Moscow. One of the most vexing was the issue of Polish-Soviet trade relations. Polish society had for years been denied the facts about its economic crisis, although the Poles, laboratory specimens of dialectical imperialism, have long known themselves to be the victims of an elaborately enslaving economic system. A world full of vociferation on the subject of neocolonialism need merely look at Polish-Soviet economic relations for a classic case study in exploitation.

The West became a silent partner to this exploitation at about the time President Nixon voyaged to the Kremlin in 1972 to clink champagne glasses with First Secretary Brezhnev and usher in the age of détente. In the run-up to that epochal event, Soviet planners had been searching for ways out of their modernization dilemma. Soviet industry, proving incapable of generating and sustaining the rate of innovation and investment required for a growing military economy, needed essential services best provided by the West. The suppression of Czechoslovakia in 1968 had been merely the latest instance of the Kremlin's preference for maintaining imperial political control to any form of rational economic decision-making. When the West, in response to this decisive consolidation of police Communism, inaugurated an era of trade and aid, it posited its own version of "linkage": totalitarianism could be "opened up" through bridges, trade, prosperity; economic cooperation would beget internal moderation and international restraint. But with this version of "linkage" the West grossly misapprehended the moving forces in the Eastern bloc and effectively rewarded the very type of Soviet behavior it claimed to abhor.

Moscow's burgeoning trade, technology, and credit needs encouraged ever-closer structural integration with reliable Warsaw Pact members. The centerpiece of the Kremlin's economic and, by definition, strategic plan was Poland—the key, as Molotov believed, to the satellite empire. Moscow pressed Warsaw (as it did other Eastern-bloc countries that today also carry crushing hard-currency debt burdens) to increase its borrowing from the West in order to graft huge quantities of technology onto an unchanged system of monopoly state control—and in many cases, to transship that technology directly to the Soviet Union. Developing a base of higher technology within the bloc would protect the Kremlin from political uncertainties and problems in getting spare parts. It would likewise minimize Soviet expenditure of hard currency, and free it for other uses. Without the worries of licenses, technologies, and the manufacture of the products themselves, Moscow could also take advantage of the superior skills and efficiency of the Polish labor force. And for the workers themselves there came a novel element in the Communist creed: the hope that a subcompact car and the most basic modern conveniences might one day be theirs. That hope proved to be in vain, as the regime's unchanging internal logic worked in concert with the West's insouciant economic policies, not to create a consumer society but to preserve an economic structure inherited from Stalin.

POLAND'S central planning had long been indissolubly bound to that of the Kremlin. Indeed, the postwar infrastructure of Polish industry was designed to meet the economic and strategic needs of the USSR far more than those of Poland. Stripping the country of its usable industrial plant soon after World War II and shipping it to Russia, Moscow engaged in its most primitive form of technology transfer. Soviet trains took entire factories out of the Silesia that Stalin so prized; even metal-turning lathes and other machine equipment the Soviets could not themselves produce were dragged, chained to tanks, back to the USSR. In exchange, the Poles received abundant propaganda lauding Soviet generosity in heroically rebuilding People's Poland.

Moscow commenced to dictate key industrial and financial decisions which made no sense even within a central planning context. The gigantic Huta Katowice steelworks, the state's proud symbol of recent development and the largest industrial complex built during the Gierek years, was a (Western-financed) development that typically met Soviet, not Polish, needs. Poles were dismayed to learn that the only railway leading from the steelworks (and straight across the Eastern border) was made to fit Soviet, not Polish, track gauge. The plant was further designed to use poor quality Soviet iron ore, with the result that its product could not find markets in the West.

By 1978, Poland had also built 200 industrial plants in the Soviet Union, for which it was required to purchase imported building materials and machinery in dollars. The technology required

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to construct one of the latest Soviet gas pipelines (Oramberg) was imported via Poland from the West. While Moscow claims to compensate by supplying Poland's energy at below world-market rates, the Polish finance minister has stated that the Soviets actually have the best of the deal. As a further part of the Polish-Soviet energy package, the best-grade coal mined by the Poles goes to the Soviet Union for non-convertible currency; the lower-grade coal is sold to the West, and for lower hard-currency prices than Poland would otherwise earn. When, during the Solidarity period, Italy offered Poland desperately needed hard currency for a sizable shipment of high-grade coal, Soviet strategic needs prevailed and the coal traveled East instead. The Kremlin is well-versed in the politics of energy.

The Polish economy, like that of the rest of the bloc, has borne onerous costs in support of Soviet foreign policy. Though the financial details are jealously guarded, Poland has paid for Soviet adventurism from Korea to Vietnam, from Angola to Afghanistan. In the late 1940's and early 50's the Polish economy was bled white to help provision the Soviet war effort in Korea. During the 1962 missile crisis, U.S. grain poured into Cuba via the port of Gdansk, its intended final destination. In the late 1960's, 90 percent of the tanks sent to Egypt through Soviet munificence were of Polish manufacture. When those unpaid-for tanks were abandoned in great numbers to fossilize in the desert after the 1973 Arab-Israel war, Poland was left holding the creditor's bag. India has received Polish tanks, costing $1 million apiece (on low-interest credit terms of 25 years with no inflation clause); in order to build them, Poland had to import dollar-financed technology. The Poles have also built 18 factories in India at unfavorable credit and exchange rates as part of Moscow's foreign aid to the Third World. Again at highly unfavorable exchange and interest rates, Poland has built substantial industrial plant in Thailand, Indonesia, Ghana, Malawi, and elsewhere.

The Western bankers and their enthusiastic governments, flush with petrodollars and the spirit of détente, evidently thought to transcend this entire economic and strategic context. But besides ignoring the fundamentals of sound lending practice and the nature of a totalitarian financial setting, the 503 private banks and dozen free governments with their diverse lending agencies also ignored the uses to which their credits were being put by the single, central Warsaw authority. For the West's $30-billion "investment" in Poland is subject to a Kremlin-devised refinement of modern colonial praxis that implicates Western authorities in more than merely misguided policies.

UNTIL 1975, Poland's trade within the Soviet bloc was based on a clearing of accounts, conducted at exchange rates that, in the case of Polish-Soviet trade, were unfavorable to Poland but not disastrously so. In 1976, with the empire expanding and the Soviet military machine growing more and more voracious, the "transferable ruble" was established as the medium of exchange between the USSR and Poland. The transferable ruble, the ingenious creation of Soviet administrators, is neither a currency nor a convertible means of payment. It cannot be used for exchange between Poland and other Soviet satellites, or to accumulate monetary reserves. It was designed for use solely along the Moscow-Warsaw axis. Poland would use hard currency received in loans from the West to purchase technology and licenses, spare parts, raw materials, and, eventually, food from Western suppliers (an estimated 40 percent of Poland's current production is based on spare parts imported with hard currency). In turn it would sell a wide range of finished products to the Soviet Union in exchange for transferable rubles.

The system allowed Moscow to bypass the problem of hard currency. In addition, because the transferable ruble was pegged at highly unfair exchange rates, the Soviets made an imperial 30 percent profit on every dollar Poland borrowed from the West. The magic medium of this special ruble resulted in Russia's "robbing Poland of its hard-currency reserves" (in the words of an unusually frank Communist party exchange published in Poland during Solidarity's open period), all the while driving its vassal state deeper into debt. In trying to meet intensifying Soviet demands, the Poles were locked into a hopeless downward spiral.

Before the institution of the transferable ruble, Poland's total debt to the West stood at $3.8 billion. Over nine-tenths of the Polish debt to the West has been incurred since 1976, when the economy was already in distress. Under the terms of the transferable ruble, Poland's ballooning hard-currency indebtedness grew in direct proportion to the volume of its trade with the Soviet Union. Indeed, one official analyst ventured to say in May 1981 that Poland's economic crisis was "rooted" in the "unjust and unfair conditions of our foreign trade." The reform of Polish-Soviet trade relations became a key condition voiced by Solidarity members, and by moderate elements at lower levels of the Communist party, for the nation to make its way back from economic catastrophe.

The influx of Western capital and technology did indeed "open up" Poland, but to systematic plunder from the East. The new accounting system made Warsaw the mecca of official Soviet buyers eager to fulfill their own quotas. Beginning in 1976, one Soviet minister after another ceremoniously visited the Polish foreign-trade department with comradely greetings. Shortly thereafter, the populace would notice chronic shortages of the very goods for which their Russian guest was professionally liable back home. After visits by the Soviet ministers of health, chemical industry, ener-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gy, and agriculture, for instance, there developed Polish shortages of drugs, chemical fertilizers, coal, grain, and meat. The spectacle spawned a new Polish joke: Soviet scientists have developed a new animal by crossing a cow with a giraffe; it can graze in Poland while being milked in the Soviet Union.

Western businessmen and diplomats were meanwhile thrilling to the new "vitality" in the East, with many touting Comecon (the Soviet bloc economic community) as the growth area of the future. Generous backing from Western export-credit agencies, and faith in the Soviet fiduciary umbrella, resulted in the rise of hard-currency debts to levels beyond financial sanity and common sense. East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and other satellites were, like Poland, pushed beyond their credit limits, getting new money—often on terms more favorable than those available to NATO governments and firms—even after their debt-service ratios had reached two and three times the level at which banks normally refuse to make further loans.

Kremlin economic policy toward Poland during the period of explosive growth in Western loans, 1976-81, only secured the two countries' industrial and strategic integration. By the late 1970's, 70 percent of the production of Poland's chemical, computer, and pharmacology industries was going to Russia. Ninety percent of the country's major railcar and locomotive production has headed East. The Soviet Union has bought 85 percent of all Polish telephone and communications equipment, enabling it to cancel purchases from the West. Every fifth ship in the rapidly expanding Soviet fleet has been of Polish make. Since 1976 Moscow has become the largest importer of Polish power stations and electrical equipment, and has stopped buying these, too, from the West.

Similar dramatic increases have occurred in the export of Polish airplane engines and armaments, as well as of the machinery required to produce these. The USSR has tripled its purchases of mining machinery, and has recorded an enormous rise in its import of Polish machine tools, construction machinery, and electronic equipment—all items produced with particularly large quantities of parts and components bought from the West with hard currency and sold for transferable rubles. In the case of the ships that are now part of the Soviet fleet, the cost to Poland of importing the substantial high technology needed for their manufacture (radar, engines, and navigation equipment, as well as high-quality steel) and the egregious financial terms of exporting the finished product to the East have been especially galling to the Lenin shipyard workers who gave birth to Solidarity.

THE real beneficiary of the financial policies of détente has been the Soviet military machine. That machine, running in top gear throughout the period of intensive East-West capital transfer, needed modernization; modernization necessitated the Western loans and technology. Poland has been an essential conduit by which the West has managed to help provision and build the military infrastructure of the Soviet empire. The roads and runways that were needed for the invasion of Afghanistan related in the most direct way to the transfer of purportedly "non-military" goods to the Soviet military economy by means of its satellites, as do the forward-position barracks, railways, and air bases now under construction in Afghanistan. To cite but one model of East-West economic cooperation, the plant built by International Harvester in Poland is "linked" to the expanding empire by sending to the Soviet Union 100 percent of its heavy-axle production for trucks. These trucks are habitually turned to military use, as the Chase Manhattan Bank may have noted after it put up the $80 million needed to build the Kama Ford plant, and saw the trucks produced then driven across the Afghan border. Polish railcars, airplane engines, armaments, and tanks, not to mention Czech and East German military hardware, are likewise part of the massive strategic build-up to which the West has turned a blind eye.

As hard experience has shown, in trading with a thoroughly militarized power the list of items for non-military use is very much shorter than champions of economic détente would suppose. It is a point not lost on the Poles. Solidarity repeatedly stressed the necessity of demilitarizing the economy if there were to be any basic economic reforms. By September 1981, after information on the transferable ruble became public in Poland, workers in the Lenin shipyard at Gdansk formally demanded an end to Polish participation in Soviet foreign-aid programs aimed at Afghanistan, Vietnam, and Cambodia; reform of Polish trade with the USSR; basic changes in the interlocking network of exploitative trade relations within Comecon; and disclosure of the purposes for which the Western loans were used. Once you start asking questions, as one Solidarity negotiator remarked, it becomes very difficult to stop: Solidarity's national congress called for a reduction in Poland's armaments and in the country's contribution to the Warsaw Pact.

It is no coincidence that the growth of East-West trade has paralleled the growth of the Soviet military machine. There is hardly a major modern Soviet weapon system in which Western technology has not been used, according to American officials, who report that about 90 percent of the technology bought by Eastern-bloc representatives in the West is used by the Soviet military.

The Soviet Union has depended significantly on the West for the means of modernizing both its tactical and its strategic forces. The transfer of technology and expertise via the Eastern-bloc economies has formed one vital part of a massive, well-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coordinated program directed by the Soviet military manufacturing industries under the Council of Ministers. An organization of some 20,000 trained Soviet personnel analyzes Western high technology, plans operations to obtain strategic products, and overcomes difficulties in acquiring those products from the U.S., Japan, and Europe. Warsaw Pact planners use their loans and scarce hard currency either to purchase technology critically needed but not readily available to them, or to acquire equipment that may be producible in the Soviet bloc but whose purchase elsewhere allows them to divert resources to more pressing programs. Hence the marked preference among Soviet-bloc officials for transferring industrial processes of little or no benefit to consumers, rather than for building up the network of bilateral trade and sustained markets the West had hoped for.

Through the open-door economic policies of détente, the Soviets have been able to purchase advanced Western technologies with far-reaching military-industrial applications. Poland has been a central partner in this process. Through Poland and its other satellites, Moscow has procured sophisticated microelectronics manufacturing equipment, important computer hardware and software, printed-circuit board technology, and large quantities of numerically controlled machine tools that have increased Soviet military production capabilities. Many of these and other "dual-use" goods—i.e., goods having both military and civilian applications—are not directly available to Moscow because of trade restrictions or specific Western embargoes.

IN ADDITION to legal means of exploiting costly Western technical innovations, the Kremlin employs illegal means; it is often the combination of the two that gives the Soviets the complete capability they need. The setting up of dummy firms in the West is one practice by which the Soviet military-industrial complex has succeeded in securing some of the West's most advanced technologies, especially in microelectronics; this acquired capability, gained via the East European conduits and otherwise beyond the Soviets' near-term technical grasp, forms the critical basis for the current wide-ranging enhancements of Soviet military systems.

Relying heavily on the Polish, Czech, and East German intelligence services, the Soviets have also run a highly organized industrial espionage operation in the West. These spy services have received Moscow's high praise for their successful acquisition efforts, which since the early 1970's have concentrated on civilian technologies such as energy, chemicals, autos, and even consumer electronics, and on military applications in the photographic, microcomputer, and microelectronic areas.

The Moscow-Warsaw axis has not hesitated to violate the "spirit of détente" by using the very instrumentalities of economic détente to do what it declared from the outset it would never cease doing: "intensify the ideological struggle." So it was business as usual for Warsaw when the Polish vice president of Polamco, a government import-export firm, took advantage of détente to act as a remarkably successful espionage agent. For $110,000 in hard currency paid to a Hughes Aircraft employee, the Warsaw Pact military establishment received a staggering return on investment, including secret reports on: the F-15 look-down-shoot-down radar system; a revolutionary radar-evading system for the B-1 and Stealth bombers; the Phoenix air-to-air missile; a towed-array submarine sonar system; a ship-borne surveillance radar; an all-weather radar system for tanks; an experimental radar system for the Navy; the improved Hawk surface-to-air missile; and the Patriot surface-to-air missile, a NATO defense system. A CIA evaluation termed this material "of prime importance to the West," and said its acquisition "will save the Polish and Soviet governments hundreds of millions of dollars in research and development efforts by permitting them to implement proven designs developed by the United States and by fielding operational counterpart systems in a much shorter period."

Still another glimpse into actual totalitarian priorities came recently when Andrzej Treumann, the highest-ranking Polish banker in the U.S., revealed himself upon his defection to the West to have been a top Warsaw Pact spy. Treumann had arranged and then renegotiated some of his country's largest loan syndications from the West that contributed so generously to Warsaw Pact military strength. Treumann's Western style and easy manner are reported to have been the protective coloration that kept Wall Street and Washington professionals from suspecting the "dual use" made of his services in foreign trade and finance.

The hidden (as well as open) infrastructure of technology transfer in which Treumann played his part continues in existence. While economic accommodationists reassert the good-faith policies of the détente era, Eastern-bloc agents crisscross the country with blank checks, according to the FBI, tempting government and industry officials in the depth of a recession to sell the items that appear on Moscow's meticulously prepared high-tech shopping list. For some purposes, at least, police Communism would seem to have sufficient hard-currency reserves.

Poland after martial law continues as before to collaborate closely with Soviet intelligence in its multifarious pursuit of technology transfer. To monitor California's Silicon Valley, one of Moscow's highest priority espionage targets, the KGB depends on the Polish consulate in San Francisco: it has the best microwave-intercept equipment of any Warsaw Pact facility in the area. Eastern-bloc science and technology organizations likewise play

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a major role in both open and clandestine acquisition of Western technology and research. It is noteworthy that in punctiliously drawing their *cordon sanitaire* around Poland, the military authorities have left open one window on the West. Although the strictest controls have been applied to the flow of people and ideas in matters of culture, information, scholarship, and humanitarian concern, trips abroad are still permitted to officially-cleared scientists and technical researchers because, in the words of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, "It is essential to maintain the most valuable forms of cooperation, to maintain contact with the leading scientific institutions abroad as well as to participate in common scientific undertakings and in international scientific events."

Finally, open-door trade policies have helped Polish security services to bolster their own strength against the Polish people. A key tactic of police Communism during "the war" (as it is known in Poland) has been to break Solidarity's lines of communication; the riot police have been indispensably aided in this maneuver by their own sophisticated communications equipment, all of which comes from West Germany. The water cannon, tear gas, and concussion grenades on which ZOMO forces have counted so heavily were supplied by companies in West Germany and Japan —two countries that opposed Poland's freedom forty years ago in a world war from which the Poles poignantly remark they have yet to be liberated. The latest Ministry of Interior computers that work to repress an increasingly resourceful democratic opposition are by Siemens of West Germany. In troublesome Silesia, special security agents are sped on their rounds in Mercedes and Alfa Romeo sedans. So it is that the free capitalist powers help provide totalitarianism with even the tools to suppress its internal contradictions.

As Solzhenitsyn has observed, technology has been a critical factor in expanding possibilities in the 20th century for fewer and fewer people to enforce their particular cruelty on the world. It is in this context that the Polish people themselves have had to answer the moral and strategic neutralism of the New York banker's question, "Who knows which politcial system works?" Ironically, the special-interest policies of Western financiers and bureaucrats, together with the strategy of "total war" that the Moscow-Warsaw axis has from the outset pursued in all its economic dealings, have helped the Poles to reach their answer.

The more relaxed and prosperous East-West relationship that détente was to foster rested on the cornerstone of expanding trade and aid. But the West's grand design of entwining the Communist world in a web of economic and political interdependencies has failed dramatically to deliver economic benefits in any conceivable comprehensive Western interest. East-West economic "cooperation" has also failed to moderate Soviet actions abroad, or to ameliorate conditions within the Soviet empire. Neither has it proved to be somehow neutral or value-free, as the partisans of business-as-usual have taken to arguing.

Far from being non-political, economic détente has by definition constituted interference in the internal affairs of Poland and the Communist bloc. But it has been interference on the side of police Communism, and against a people who aspire to nothing so much as the West's own deepest values. For how long will the advocates of "good faith" in East-West economic relations remain careless of the now indisputable fact that their ideas have had quite concrete consequences in promoting the vitality and efficiency of totalitarian evil?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Socialism & Its Irresponsibilities: The Case of Irving Howe

Midge Decter

ANYONE who wished to trace the tides and fortunes of American socialism since the 1930's could do worse than examine the intellectual and political development of Irving Howe: critic, writer, editor, and socialist *par excellence*. To be sure, Mr. Howe's career—not unlike American socialism itself—has kept him in an only glancing and sometime connection to the Socialist party as such. But in both the nature and order of the issues that have presented themselves as central to him, and in his response to those issues, one can find a fair summary of the movement of American socialist thought over half a century.

He began, in boyhood, as a committed Marxist; took part in the great internal Marxist battle on the side of Trotsky and in bitter, impassioned opposition to the forces—both political and cultural—of Stalin; and has ended as a considerably less impassioned but no less fully preoccupied foe of an enemy he calls "conservatism," by which term he means mainly the abandonment of the Left by a number of his former associates and allies. His language and mode of analysis have gradually moved from the realm of the political, namely the realm in which he once, long ago, sought to make the revolution, to the realm of the moral, in which he speaks as a man devoting his mind and heart to the "steady work"—to borrow the title of one of his own books—of inveighing against the real in the name of the ideal.

The story of this development he has attempted, quite selectively, to set down in a new book entitled *A Margin of Hope*.* The book is subtitled "An Intellectual Autobiography," clearly in an effort to deflect any expectation on the part of the reader that he is being invited to inspect the kind of private, inner detail generally associated with the enterprise of autobiography; for of such detail there is virtually none. Three entirely casual references to Mr. Howe's wife, for instance, provide no hint that these are in fact three separate wives. Children make no appearance at all. His mother and father are introduced and play a brief role, serving largely to furnish the social and cultural stage on which he makes his entrance. But where they came from or who they really were is permitted no importance in the strictly bounded account Mr. Howe gives of himself. For this, it is by and large enough to know that they were East European Jewish immigrants, spoke Yiddish, worried about, and sometimes shamed, their son, and worked in the garment center.

Nor is there even much of friendship. Figures are sketched—party comrades, teachers, mentors, and later, a number of fellow literary intellectuals and professors—and, though his literary gifts lie elsewhere, in some cases the sketches are done quite interestingly. These figures serve in the story, however, only as they have bearing upon, or in some way influence, Mr. Howe's own career or development. In short, it is the author's forming and changing attitudes that constitute the only real subject of his account. To present oneself this way is perfectly legitimate, but it does in Mr. Howe's case result in an oddly enclosed and unmoving piece of work. The formation of his attitudes, despite the fact that in one way or another he has most of the time declared his fealty to some larger group or "movement," evidently strikes him in retrospect as having been a solitary process: an unmediated confrontation, as it were, between Irving Howe and something imagined to be society writ large.

IRVING HOWE was born and grew up in the Bronx. When he was around eleven years old, his family migrated from the West Bronx to the East Bronx, which meant then, as it probably would now, that they had suffered a decline from the middle to the working class. His father, a failed storekeeper, became a presser and his mother, a sewing-machine operator. Unremitting labor was the permanent requirement of the household, but the young Irving Howe was nevertheless to go to college and be afforded the time and freedom to become a roving radical intellectual.

Years later, he would pay tribute to the life and times of the Yiddish-speaking immigrant in New York in a best-selling volume called *World of Our Fathers*. Reading it, one would suppose that the entire population of East European Jewish immigrants went through a passage during which, in

MIDGE DECTER is executive director of the Committee for the Free World. Her books include *The Liberated Woman & Other Americans*, *The New Chastity*, and *Liberal Parents, Radical Children*.

* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 368 pp., $14.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

response to the combined awesomeness, hardship, and liberty of the New World, they were radical or at least vaguely and sentimentally socialist. For the legendary world of Mr. Howe's fathers included virtually no synagogues, no yeshivahs, no rabbis, a few Democratic ward-heelers but certainly no Republicans, and above all, no representatives of that strange and to Mr. Howe hostile breed known as Zionists: only workers dreaming of the advancement of their children through education, street-corner idlers and agitators, theatergoers, journalists, café intellectuals, political and union leaders, and, as I have said, leftists of one variety or another and nascent New Dealers. It is a world of gripping photographs by Jacob Riis and mannered Yiddishist memories.

The world he so popularly depicted may have been the world of Mr. Howe's elected "Fathers," but his own flesh-and-blood father happened to be a Jew of a less photogenic kind—indeed, a kind altogether familiar to anyone with a less stylized grasp of the reality of that time. Howe Senior was, for example, without being demonstratively observant, still linked by old loyalties, or perhaps just by propriety, to the synagogue. His son became a bar mitzvah. He was, moreover, opposed to his son's attending the nearby Yiddish school run by the Workmen's Circle, a socialist fraternal order, because "he felt ill at ease with the bluntly secular. It was as if he knew what 'the real thing' was in Judaism, even though himself gradually slipping away from it." Therefore when the fourteen-year-old Irving Howe nevertheless fell into the arms of the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), lying in wait for him in the loft occupied by the Workmen's Circle school, his father was far from pleased. As was the case with so many immigrants of his time and circumstance, Mr. Howe's father emerges from the brief references to him in the book as a man mainly governed by nagging problems of self-respect. (To be poor when others were poor was for most people in the early 30's a considerable sop to this problem; later, for those who remained behind, it would nag decisively.)

Here we have a more or less conventional sketch of an immigrant family, but the convention is of a rather different kind from that which controlled Mr. Howe's recent and far more colorful literary voyage into the American Jewish past. This present tale is one for which the reader presumably has ample experience and requires little guidance from the author—the tale of a bright son sent off to make his way in an alien America and there, painfully for all concerned, becoming an alien himself.

For Irving Howe the journey of assimilation into the "real" America was begun in the socialist movement. If such a mode of assimilation now seems improbable, it was far from unique to him. In the Young People's Socialist League, the youth arm of Norman Thomas's Socialist party, he found a whole gang of others just like him. Together they roamed the neighborhood, and from there the city, distributing leaflets, arguing till the wee hours over cups of coffee in cafeterias, going to foreign films on 42nd Street (how much of the history of contemporary intellectual life is bound to memories of *Grand Illusion* and *Alexander Nevsky* on 42nd Street?), preaching Marxism and revolution at street corners, and no doubt—though the book is elegantly discreet about this—fumbling around with the female comrades.

In YPSL, he quickly encountered the two major quarrels that were, in a number of variations and on a number of occasions, to rive the American Left. There was the quarrel, or in the parlance of the Left itself, the "split," between the moderates and the militants. Crudely stated, this was the rift between those who sought to bring about socialism through gradual reform and those who believed in making the revolution. Mr. Howe was a militant. Next there was the quarrel between the Trotskyites and the Stalinists, that is, between those who saw in Stalin's murderous brutality the betrayal of the revolution and those who defended or denied it, or both.

From his position of militancy within the Socialist party—though as with most of the hard facts of Mr. Howe's political history, *A Margin of Hope* is here quite unforthcoming about the specifics—it was a short move into the camp of Trotsky. It was, of course, the Stalin-Trotsky split that was to remain decisive in Mr. Howe's life, as in the life of everyone who came within, or even near, the orbit of Trotskyism. Whatever the twistings, turnings, splittings, and sub-splittings that followed, and there were several, an undying hatred for Stalin's regime and its defenders, for the society it established in the Soviet Union, and for the political culture it spawned elsewhere, would remain key.

The Trotskyite movement, which was called the Socialist Workers party—small enough already, God knows, within an American Left dominated by a combination of the witting loyalists and the dupes of Stalin, among them famous writers, journalists, Hollywood and Broadway celebrities, and millionaires—split in 1940. This time the rift, though those who took part in it may not at the time have agreed to so simple a formulation, was over the issue of Bolshevism. The question as it was posed was: does Stalin's betrayal of the revolution deprive the Soviet Union of its status as the workers' fatherland? On one side were the people, including Trotsky himself, who were prepared to remain committed to the Russian Revolution and to blame Stalin alone for the crimes perpetrated in its name. On the other side (though still calling themselves Trotskyists) were those who, led by a brilliant and magnetic leader named Max Schachtman, were (for the time being) prepared to say that the true, the genuine revolution had not happened yet. Irving Howe was one of these. In 1940, he and his comrades broke away from the SWP and established the Workers' party, membership at most 1,000. He became, in other words, a member of a tiny fraction of a small fraction of a larger frac-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion of the world revolution. He was not yet twenty-one years old.

IT IS all too easy from this safe distance in time to be amused by the antics of the anti-Stalinist Left in those years, by the desperate factional fights over questions of how to reorder the world conducted by groups whose very existence may not have been known to more than a handful of their fellow citizens. But, as all too many of us all too often need to be reminded, people who fight over ideas are fighting for their lives —and frequently for ours as well. The positions taken by seemingly laughably tiny groups of intellectuals often reverberate through places and among people who will never even have heard of them.*

In any case, Irving Howe spent his years at City College of New York—he was graduated in the year of the split, 1940—as a Trotskyite leader and organizer. Much has been written about City College in those days, if for no other reason than that a disproportionate number of the country's most serious and articulate future journalists were in attendance. As a result, City College in the late 30's is widely deemed to have been a great school. Judging from Mr. Howe's memories, however, little of the education it provided took place in classrooms. His own college training certainly did not but was provided, largely by himself, in the lunchroom. There were the two storied alcoves, the all-day hangouts respectively of the Stalinists and the Trotskyites. And there he and many others, for the most part disregarding classes, sharpened their wits in rehearsal of the leftist political and polemical battles raging in the world outside.

Some of these battles Mr. Howe tends to skip over rather lightly—and not without reason. The Trotskyite war with the Stalinists, with rare and honorable exceptions the only contention against Soviet Communism that even came near to exposing its true horror in a culture grown besotted with the word "progressive," had nevertheless found no common ground with "bourgeois capitalism" (i.e., Western democracy). In Trotskyite eyes, Hitler and fascism were not seen as the arch foes of that democracy but rather its end products. They were not held to be, as we now understand them to be, the monstrous offspring of a kind of primitive ("national") socialism grown malignant, but rather the direct lineal heirs of capitalism. Thus as Hitler moved across Europe, it was no business of the Trotskyites: the struggle against Nazism and the struggle against bourgeois imperialism were one and the same. They were opposed to American intervention in World War II—and remained opposed throughout the war. They were in effect in a coalition with the isolationists and reactionaries of America First.

Along with his comrades, Irving Howe argued firmly against American participation—though he does not quite say so. He says rather that the position they took in public did not precisely reflect their real views. Deep down, he tells us, he and his comrades recognized that there was "some truth" in most people's feelings "that Nazi Germany signified a social evil far greater than that of capitalism." "We moved, I suppose, to what Marxists called a position of 'critical support' for the war, though we didn't make this explicit—" and with one of those admissions of error that are the gentlest form of self-exculpation, he adds, "and I don't want in the least to deny the deep error of not making it explicit."

Be that as it may, for a Jew, any Jew, to have proclaimed World War II merely a war between two "imperialisms"—whether he held in reserve the capacity to make certain distinctions between them or not—had to have been a significant and haunting act. The level of moral and political comprehension it reveals aside, it signaled a refusal to be bound by the imperatives of what was one's ineluctable own. Mr. Howe had taken himself beyond the cultural, and personal, identity given him by his birth into an immigrant Jewish family. This was, to be sure, a process undergone by the vast majority of the children of East European immigrants, and wittingly or unwittingly encouraged by their parents. For him, as we have seen, this move was accomplished—again not uniquely—by throwing himself into socialism. To be a socialist was to become a citizen of the whole world. Justice, morality, social equity were to be sought on behalf of and among the whole of mankind taken all together—or failing that, on behalf of and among an equally abstract universal, the workers of the world. That mankind, or "the workers," had an overriding common interest above family, clan, and country, *if they but knew it*, was and remains a notion hard for socialists to shed; indeed, it constitutes the ineradicable, arrogant blind spot of socialism.

So faced with the Nazi persecution of the Jews, everyone who continued to speak the language of "fascism/capitalism" and "imperialism" was announcing that there were more important things to consider than the lives of mere Jews. Loyalty to the interests, not to say survival, of one's own was parochial and tribal. The Algerian-born Albert Camus once earned the opprobrium of his fellow French intellectuals (it sticks to his memory until today) for refusing to side with the rebels in the Algerian war on the grounds that they might easily kill his mother. Such a declaration always comes as a profound shock to the nervous system of the Left.

There were those among Howe's Jewish comrades who discovered, possibly to their surprise, that when push came to shove it mattered to them that they were Jews and that Hitler was slaughtering

* James Q. Wilson, a political thinker hardly known for hasty or breezy judgments, some years ago quipped that the future of the Democratic party depended upon which of two warring factions among the Social Democrats U.S.A. would prevail. The factions he referred to were the group committed to the labor movement and the group advocating the so-called New Politics; the verdict is not yet in.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their brothers. And there were also those among his Jewish and non-Jewish fellow intellectuals who discovered that they were being impelled by such simple, albeit unfamiliar, emotions as love of country. All this quite apart from the fact that the distinction between the social order bred in capitalist democracy and that of Nazism was one that could have been made by any unperverted ten-year-old. "Critical support" for a war between Britain or the United States and Nazi Germany, especially when that war was so clearly an all-or-nothing one, was hardly to be deemed support at all. Were Mr. Howe able to see this now, and say so; were socialists able to see that politics in the 20th century has a way of presenting people with stark choices and that the pretense of commitment to a third alternative is itself always a choice—on the wrong side; then both Mr. Howe's history and that of socialism would make a brave and salutary story. Alas, they do not.

Well into the book, and speaking in another connection, Mr. Howe defends himself for having had so little to say about the Holocaust. He observes, justly, that Holocaust-mongering is not necessarily the sign of a deeper or truer feeling; that there is still, finally, something incomprehensible in the deliberate, systematic murder of six million people; and that silence is perhaps not the least appropriate response. The self-defense is, however, curious, and comes at a curious moment. For what Mr. Howe says is widely acknowledged; no one worthy of respect has to my knowledge condemned anyone else for a failure to speechify on the subject. One cannot escape the impression that the self-justification in this instance refers to something else: to that period during the war when Mr. Howe —nowadays a kind of Jewish literary hero, author of *World of Our Fathers*—held himself to be outside or above the issue of the particular, parochial survival of either his people or his country. The reckoning here would seem to be with himself, though once again without "making it explicit."

IN 1942, he was drafted into the army. Whatever his reservations about the war, he served. It was in fact the policy of the Schachtmanites to allow themselves to be drafted. He does not tell us so, but among the considerations feeding into this policy was the opportunity that would be afforded them by the military to get into contact with "the masses." Unlike many radical intellectuals, particularly those of the Stalinist persuasion, whose notion of radical action was the sponsorship of meetings and cocktail parties attended by the celebrated and well-born, the Schachtmanites had actually "gone to the people." Groups of them had been sent to the industrial centers of the Midwest, Detroit preeminently, to work in factories and to organize. In both cases, that of the factories and the armed services, the policy would prove to be a fateful one, for the movement itself and for its members. No movement can seriously engage its people in the day-to-day working lives of its supposed beneficiaries without being profoundly tainted by reality.

The reality that tainted Irving Howe in the army was not so much that of the actual nature of ordinary people—though that, too—as of his own actual nature. For within the political activist there had all along been beating the secret heart of a writer and literary intellectual, an essentially independent and solitary figure whose true companions were not agitators and comrades but books and the authors of books. For two years he sat with little to do at Fort Richardson outside Anchorage, Alaska, and there, all activism spent, he met his other permanent self. From now on, his services to socialism, whatever they might prove to be, would be provided largely by his pen.

He read all the "hard books" in literary criticism and social theory that had failed to call to him through the noise of the alcove in City College. He acquainted himself with a large dose of the best that had been thought and said outside the confines of Marx and Trotsky. In the army, then, he planted the seeds of what was to become his future career: a teacher of, and writer about, literature as refracted through the medium of social theory—what we have come to call a "literary intellectual."

In so doing, he was preparing once again to encounter a very special group of his counterparts. They, too, were many of them Jews; they, too, were sworn enemies of Stalinism in all its manifestations; they, too, regardless of their level of academic attainment, were essentially self-educated, devotees of a new cultural amalgam, as yet alien to the universities and as yet untouched by the deadening hand of academic piety, known as modernism. Like radicalism, modernism addressed itself to the crisis of bourgeois society—in this case, bourgeois sensibility. Though many of its heroes and founders, e.g., T. S. Eliot, were reactionary in their politics rather than revolutionary, or rather, reactionary along with revolutionary, they trumpeted the death of the old order and broke through to a new way of seeing, sensing, and speaking.

Modernism, when it was alive and vital, lived in small magazines. The ground broken by the early pioneering of the avant-garde was now to be cleared, planted, made habitable by small communities of the initiated huddling around small publishing enterprises. What followed was a heady time, dubbed by the poet Randall Jarrell, with some irony but where no irony was required, the Age of Criticism. It was to these small magazines, and particularly *Partisan Review*, that Irving Howe, Trotskyite-turned-modernist, was drawn in the postwar years as the filing finds the magnet. In movement days, he had served for a time as editor (which in such cases also means author) of the Schachtmanite paper, *Labor Action*. Now, ensconced for family reasons in the town of Princeton—where, he tells us, he moved at the edges of the modernist enclave established there by R.P. Blackmur and at various times peopled by such

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

promising young literary men as Delmore Schwartz, Saul Bellow, and John Berryman—he learned to tame the fevered, strident literary *persona* of the agitator and to become a writer and critic.

It was of the essence of the *Partisan Review* world that its denizens were not "specialists" in the sense acknowledged by universities. Social comment, literature, philosophy, political analysis, if not strictly equal—for the prime jewel in this crown, of course, was Art—blurred into one another and jointly stood at the service of the highest form of criticism. Irving Howe's placement in that world can most accurately be described by saying that he tended to occupy himself with American literature (though he wrote a good deal about European literature) and that he inevitably, sometimes without wishing to, stood at the nexus between literary sky and political earth. He was some years later to become a professor, as were most of his fellows. Not surprisingly, his academic career would commence at Brandeis University, a young institution founded and supported by Jews that had telescoped the normally long and painstaking process of becoming prestigious by taking on major faculty members not on the basis of academic accreditation but by virtue of their reputed achievements.

WHEN did he cease to be a Trotskyite? Among the many things he glosses over is the breaking of his ties with the Workers party. Was there an occasion, a particular issue, or did he merely drift away, and when? True, the Workers party was itself to undergo a further evolution: to dissolve, in fact, and enter—ultimately take over—the Socialist party. Moreover, Mr. Howe's new literary companions on and around *Partisan Review*, in their continuing declared loyalty to the Left and their central devotion to anti-Stalinism, could be roughly characterized as in some sense Trotskyite. They were indeed often spoken of, in a phrase borrowed from the typology of Stalinism, as "fellow-travelers" of the Trotskyites. Such a characterization, however, was only a gross one, quite inapplicable to many of the individuals embraced by it. For Mr. Howe becoming an ex-Trotskyite, especially in view of the intensity with which party commitments were made and regarded by party comrades, had to have been a wrench. We may suppose, we are left only to suppose, that whatever the specific occasion for it, his conversion from convinced radical to unsystematic and unaffiliated socialist was somehow initiated by the war and completed during the 1950's.

However and whenever it came about, as a token of this conversion, and of a continuing preoccupation with politics parallel to his newfound preoccupation with literature, in 1953 he founded a little magazine of his own, *Dissent*. As the magazine's name implies, its purpose was to create a center for leftist criticism of capitalism and bourgeois society —particularly in their American variant—outside the purview of party and sect. He and the group of associates who started *Dissent* "all agreed that, if socialism had a future as either politics or idea, there would have to be a serious or prolonged reconsideration of its premises." As the years between 1953 and 1960 wore on, and *Dissent* managed to survive, its circle of editors and contributors, in Mr. Howe's words, "kept shedding more and more ideology." By the latter date, Mr. Howe asserts, "most of us no longer thought of ourselves as Marxists. At times we seemed to have nothing left but the animating ethic of socialism."

Perhaps, but something there was that contributed heavily both to Mr. Howe's and to *Dissent*'s animation beyond the need to see what could be salvaged from the shards of a no longer ideologically anchored socialism. That was the now famous (and famously defamed) "conservative" cultural atmosphere of the 1950's. He claimed to feel surrounded by intellectuals rushing in unseemly fashion, and from the unseemliest of motives, to desert their traditionally appointed posts as enemies of the status quo. Postwar America was growing rich and expansively hospitable to its heretofore excluded writers, thinkers, and dreamers (he himself, before going to Brandeis, had been employed as a book reviewer by *Time* magazine); and he found that with the honorable exceptions only of himself, a small band of associates, and a few odd loners, the intellectual community was on the whole responding to this hospitality by selling its heart and mind to the system. In a celebrated essay, published in *Partisan Review* in 1954, he characterized the period as "This Age of Conformity," and in a tone bearing certain unerased vestiges of his early training in Trotskyite invective, accused his fellow intellectuals of having traded their critical birthright for the pottage of jobs, respectability, and honors. They had, in the idiom of radicalism, "sold out." Some, he claimed, were merely being overgrateful for unanticipated material comfort; some were purchasing importance in the councils of the corporation and government; some were simply being cowardly in the face of a great new tide of conservatism sweeping over the country, a tide whose respectable expression was a new concern with such things as religion, ancient political philosophy, and Freudian theory, and whose capacity for ugliness was expressed in the vicious jingo anti-Communism of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy.

Playing in what Mr. Howe would have acknowledged was the respectable end of this tide, *Partisan Review* in 1952 published a symposium entitled "Our Country and Our Culture." This symposium, a significant document of the time, posed the question to its contributors as to whether their former stance of alienation wasn't being replaced by the wish "to be a part of American life." Out of two dozen contributors to this symposium—aside from Mr. Howe himself, of course—only Norman Mailer, C. Wright Mills, and "in part" Philip Rahv, the magazine's co-editor, answered the question to his satisfaction, i.e., in the negative. But even at the ugly end of 50's conservatism, the McCarthyite end, he says—again save for Mr. Howe and his *Dissent*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

associates—the intellectuals had proved themselves at the very least inadequate. *Partisan Review*, he remembers, was insufficiently concerned, and COMMENTARY, emphasizing the threat to America from the Communists, was worse.*

Disputes about McCarthyism aside—and it seems that even after thirty years we shall never have done with them, providing so many people as they do with the opportunity to wrap themselves in piety and ignore the difficult and complex issue that actually lies behind them—Mr. Howe's distorted account of the 50's is the one, as we know, that has stuck. Seeing the 50's as a period of cowardly or opportunistic conformity, of the intellectuals' failure to maintain the degree of alienation toward American life necessary to the rightful exercise of their calling, has become pure convention. Indeed, despite his youthful radical temper, or no doubt *because* of it, almost nowhere in his voluminous writings on literature and society do we find an *un*conventional account of anything: neither literary work, nor idea, nor political issue. Even the nature of Jewish experience, an interest that came to him relatively late, came full-blown as the creature of sentimental leftist-Yiddishist convention.

Anyone who was on the scene, however, and Mr. Howe most emphatically was, had to have experienced the 50's within the intellectual community as exactly the opposite, as a time of unparalleled literary and intellectual vitality, of battles and discoveries, gropings, reconsiderations, examinations, fresh and independent judgments, and a veritable explosion of creativity. There were new writers—unmatched as new talents till this day—and newly directed modes of analysis, compared with which moving into the radicalism of the late 60's and 70's was like returning to an airless cell. America was discovered in the 50's and so was Europe. It was during those years that America's universities enjoyed their one brief moment of lively connection to the central creative impulses in the surrounding world. Whatever was going on in American society at large (and not the least important thing going on was the birthing and rearing in uncertain and indulgent fashion of a vast cohort of children who would be lying in wait to wreak havoc on our cultural life), those privileged to live within the spaces of the intellectual community were enjoying the highest of excitements.

How, then, did this period come to be fixed—with the considerable aid of Mr. Howe himself—as a dull and oppressive time? The answer to this question emerges starkly from Mr. Howe's book. It was a time—who could know how brief it would prove to be?—when utopianism of every kind was in eclipse; the energy was elsewhere. The recognition of what Hitler and Stalin had wrought, undreamed of in the philosophies both of pious liberals and reckless utopians, had brought in its wake the recognition of much else. The whole world was open to reexamination.

It had in fact mattered desperately which of the "imperialisms" won the war. We had been brought back, it was no occasion for abstract chatter, from the brink of the abyss. Something had been wrong with the radical intellectual's relation to society, and above all, with his relation to life. Bourgeois society, with all its acknowledged sins—and itself still uncomprehending, still in the grip of all its old fatuousness—had nevertheless saved us. It had not only saved us but had proved itself institutionally sound. Who could now dare to destroy it, and who could any longer be so recklessly arrogant as to dismiss it? In this recognition lay the source of the 50's energy. And by the same token, in this recognition lay the opportunity, the *only* opportunity, for leftist opposition.

The "animating ethic" of socialism that Mr. Howe and *Dissent* were left with, sans the cutting edge of Marxist theory and Marxist ideology, was no more than a will to remain utopian: utopianism, as it were, without utopia. Thus the magazine, Mr. Howe says so himself, was (and remains) dull, clotted with old thoughts devoid of any serious reference to reality and merely concerned with the purity of its appearance. "Often *Dissent* must have seemed anxious, distracted, even boring. For we had to turn in upon ourselves . . . yet [fight] hard against opponents who wanted summarily to dismiss [socialist] principles," says Mr. Howe. In other words, committed to carrying on the tradition of full-throated opposition to bourgeois capitalist society, it has had to evade, or ignore, the inevitable question: in comparison to what? The truth is that ignoring inevitable questions leaves one with very little new or arresting to say.

THE 60's arrived for Mr. Howe, as they did for everyone on or near the Left, in a burst of hope. The Southern civil-rights movement, introducing a new mode of nonviolent resistance, carried with it among other things the momentary illusion for utopians that there was a way actively and enthusiastically to oppose American society without at the same time giving aid and comfort to the Soviet Union. Before the decade was half over, however, it had become clear to those with eyes to see that we were once more heading around the track of the 30's. If the Soviet Union was no longer the name of leftist desire —the 50's had at least seen to that—there were substitutes: mainly Cuba (to be followed by Chile, North Vietnam, Nicaragua . . .). If there was no respectable Communist network controlling the party line and hoodwinking naive liberals, there

* It would be hard to tell from reading Mr. Howe's account that both the earliest and most thorough analysis of the McCarthy phenomenon had appeared in COMMENTARY, nor that by 1954 McCarthy had been destroyed, and by a conservative administration. Nor would one know that the only "debate" about McCarthy among the intellectuals had been about whether or not he was the harbinger of a coming American fascism—a question whose historical outcome Mr. Howe conveniently neglects to mention. In compiling the record of opposition to McCarthy to which Howe refers, *Dissent*, only founded in 1953, must have been mainly conducting a post-mortem.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was nevertheless a growing radical student movement which had adopted both its styles of thought and its public manners—along with its breezily truculent, self-serving unconcern for the principles of liberty. Insofar as there could be anything in the least unfamiliar to a man of Mr. Howe's youthful experience about the country's disaffected youth, it would have been the allegiance of so many to the ideas and practices of anarchism. Nonviolence quickly turned to violence. The refusal to be bound by rules, any rules, turned children against their elders, impelled them to don rags and roam the country simulating poverty, destroy their brains with drugs, burn books, and rage against the very idea of responsibility, social, intellectual, or personal.

This was not what Mr. Howe or anyone else had bargained for in the halcyon days of sit-ins and freedom rides. Any illusions that the youthful turn to radicalism might be offering a genuinely fresh start to the process of social transformation had to be purchased at the price of denying what was before one's very eyes. A new crisis of decision seized the intellectual community: to stifle one's own hard-earned experience and become slavish to the easy insolence of the children, or to earn the epithets—epithets so recently put into circulation by Irving Howe himself and those he approved of—"establishment," "conformist," and "sell-out." The record of response to this crisis speaks for itself and need not be rehearsed. The number of people who collapsed into silence, or greeted the intellectually and artistically barbaric effusions of revived Marxist and anarchist radicalisms with forced solemnity, or simply cowered and simpered and surrendered, was legion.

Mr. Howe, as it happened, was not one of these. Fortified perhaps by his own memory of radical infighting and invective, he got the message and took it to heart: "I felt that some of the [New Left] spokesmen wanted not just to refute my opinions . . . but also to erase, to eliminate, to 'smash' people like me." He became a resister. And like all resisters in those times, when the word "freedom" was on everybody's lips but its exercise was being outlawed in the literary-intellectual community, he suffered great strain, personal as well as public, in his relations with that community. Old friends like Norman Mailer it was no longer possible to be playful with. There was a brutal exchange with Philip Rahv—once, as editor of *Partisan Review*, a central figure in the lives and careers of at least two generations of younger intellectuals—in the pages of the *New York Review of Books* (Rahv had "accused" him of being one of those social democrats who clung to the "democrat" at the expense of the "social"). Personal loyalty had never been any part of Philip Rahv's public or private baggage, but there were others, more ordinarily endowed, who fell by the wayside as well.*

BEHIND this crisis of the intellectual community loomed the Vietnam war —more, as it turned out, an excuse than a cause. For only a very few members of that community supported the war. The debate turned not on whether the war was a good thing or a bad thing so far as United States interests were concerned, but whether it was moral or immoral to attempt to obstruct the "liberation" of South Vietnam by the Vietcong and Hanoi. Mr. Howe, as usual, took a third position: that American support for the government of Saigon was immoral precisely because it would *assure* the victory of the Communists. "Even if one judged the Saigon regime to be a 'lesser evil,' the reality in Vietnam was that once the civil war began, support to Saigon meant assuring the victory of Hanoi." Opposing the war while viewing with dread the prospects of a Communist victory proved to be a minority position among the intellectuals. It was, though perhaps practically sound, a morally confused position; and it was not Mr. Howe's alone but could be found throughout the so-called "responsible" precincts of the antiwar movement (including the pages of COMMENTARY). To defend this position with pride in 1982, however, as Mr. Howe does, is a rather different matter. The grim and politically dangerous results of America's withdrawal from Vietnam may have been without alternative but they are certainly a *moral* blot on the advocates of that withdrawal. In any case, at the time conditions of any kind attached to one's opposition to the war were enough to keep one in an embattled state.

Mr. Howe's resistance to the cultural and political rowdiness of 60's radicalism lost him old friends but brought him new ones, if all too briefly. The socialist tradition of splits, new coalitions, followed by newer splits and newer coalitions, was to find a new translation. He writes at some length about Richard Hofstadter and Lionel Trilling, once dismissed as conservatives and now rediscovered as humane liberals. Other connections, such as that with COMMENTARY, seem to have fled from his memory altogether, but were nevertheless made. Though with a selectivity that goes so far as to invite the word "dishonest," and with a good deal of retrospective apology ("I overreacted, becoming at times harsh and strident. I told myself that I was one of the few people who took the New Left seriously enough to keep arguing with it"), the point is

* Mr. Howe of all people might have had ample preparation for this, for in the department of public brutality his own Trotskyite training had not vanished without leaving behind its vivid traces. He himself once called a public meeting—it is described with pride and satisfaction in his book—to further the controversy raging over Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The meeting was, to put it mildly, unruly; if one can say such a thing of the treatment of a book, it was a lynching. Hannah Arendt's work fully deserved the outrage it occasioned, if for nothing else than its tone. Nevertheless, it did not then and does not now occur to Mr. Howe that gathering a mob against a book is not a proper form of intellectual manners. As a critic, he had available to him a better—one should say the only—decent means of conducting literary controversy, i.e., pen and paper. Thus, as he was to learn over and over on his own flesh, do the habits of radical activism incline one to spectacle rather than argument.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made: the New Left was in his opinion fomenting a disaster, repeating, in fact, all the mistakes of his own youth and then some, and he refused to go along.

So deprived of any lingering hope of radicalism, Mr. Howe faced the 70's. These were the years that were to solidify and broaden his fame as a writer. They were to provide a new movement for social progress—militant feminism—toward which he quickly suppressed his original impulse of opposition and took up his preferred posture of endorsing the ends and being occasionally regretful about the means. The 70's were to bring him into relation with Israel, the same relation he had adopted toward the West during World War II, namely, one of "critical support." They were to introduce into his life an enriching new passion, the ballet. They were to bring a side interest in Yiddish literature into full creative connection with his socialism, producing his longest, sprightliest, and best-received book, *World of Our Fathers*. They were to confront him with the death of his father, an event that, for middle-aged men especially, brings, along with grief, meditations as sweet as they are frightening on the meaning of their own lives. Above all, the 70's brought the taming of the radical student movement, and with it, relief from the great burden of complexity in having to walk a narrow line between the Marxists and the capitalists, between Hanoi and Washington, between the young and the authorities. The territory of the Left had once again been cleared and opened, and he was able to return home. All in all, for Irving Howe at least, it was a good decade.

The home to which he returned, facing the 80's, had been pretty badly burnt out. Marxism was gone; radicalism had for a second and final time been ruled out; socialism, its name taken in vain by a majority of the world's most ugly despotisms and its programs in practice leading everywhere to economic blight and progressive immiseration, had been permanently reduced to an "animating ethic." No serious new ideas, large plans of action, or even, strictly speaking, near-term policies were to be planted in such charred and used-up soil. One thing only was left to cultivate, a growth impervious to the sterility and exhaustion of its surroundings: namely, Mr. Howe's hostility to those who refused to return home with him.

Somewhere in *A Margin of Hope* he remarks, "Conservative thought in the 50's, the kind that was openly declared, can seem fairly benign when compared with the rougher, meaner versions of three decades later." What he is referring to here, of course, is the "movement" called neoconservatism. For Mr. Howe, neoconservatism is to be distinguished from the kind of conservatism for which he can now feel a muted, backward-glancing respect by the fact that the neoconservatives were once men of the Left who turned on it in its days of grief. Having seen and been chastened by the weaknesses of socialism, they offered their loyalty to capitalism. This in his eyes would have been mean enough, for it proved they had no "compassion." But they did worse. They not only gave up the dream for the reality, but they proceeded to declare the dream the wrong dream. Moreover, they had the effrontery to offer moral arguments for doing so. Capitalism, they said, was not just the only alternative to socialist failure, it was actually the *better* alternative. They were, they said, not only accepting but embracing the implications of their experience. This was unforgivable, and saying so has been the major if not the sole source of Mr. Howe's remaining political vigor, and that of his magazine, for some time. After all, the experience whose implications the neoconservatives had accepted and come to live by had been his experience as well; yet *he* had found no such acceptance necessary.

The "ethic" of a socialist whose socialism has no content beyond the hope of what Mr. Howe calls "a radical humanism"—a term that 20th-century history has in any case rendered an oxymoron—is evidently the ethic of merely assuming one's moral superiority. It is a posture rather than an ethic, a posture adopted with the express purpose of holding one's skirts above the mud of reality:

> The kind [of utopia] imposed by an elite in the name of a historical imperative—that utopia is hell. It must lead to terror and then, terror exhausted, to cynicism and torpor. But surely there is another utopia. It exists at no point in time and space, it is never merely given, it cannot be willed either into existence or out of sight, it speaks for our sense of what yet may be. Or may not. But whether a real option or mere fantasy, this utopia is as needed by mankind as bread and shelter.

From this posture, no failure of policy ever need be confronted, no error need be confessed. Most of all, no choices need be made. Just as he could once hope for the defeat of the Nazis without "making explicit" his support for the war that was the means of bringing about that defeat, so now he can cling to his belief in the principles of liberty and his hopes for a worldwide improvement in the public welfare without having to involve himself seriously in the question of how those beliefs and hopes might actually be secured.

It is little wonder that he has become a figure to be applauded and cherished by all those—calling themselves socialists or sometimes, euphemistically, liberals—who wish to enjoy their freedom and yet for whom the freedom most to be cherished is the freedom to remain hostile critics of so many of the things that freedom itself depends on.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Theologian of the Holocaust

Hyam Maccoby

OF ALL the painful reconsiderations of the meaning of Jewish experience to which the Holocaust has given birth in our time, that undertaken over the last decades by the theologian Emil Fackenheim is perhaps the most rigorous and, at the same time, the most moving. A survivor of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, Fackenheim is a professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto and has published a half-dozen books (among them *Quest for Past and Future, The Jewish Return into History, Encounters between Judaism and Modern Philosophy,* and *God's Presence in History*) which may be characterized as sustained philosophical meditations on the religious significance of Jewish historical experience, especially in our century.

As a thinker, Fackenheim is a unique hybrid. He is in the tradition of the great European system builders, and indeed he regards himself, with some justice, as alone among Jewish thinkers today in the pursuit of systematic explanations. His painstaking exegeses of Hegel, Spinoza, Rosenzweig, Heidegger, Buber, and others are aimed at uncovering their insights—and their misapprehensions—so that they can be made to contribute to a *new* philosophy of Judaism for today's world.

Yet Fackenheim's formidable powers as a professional academic philosopher have a quite explicitly acknowledged goal that lies outside the realm of metaphysics altogether, and that is summed up in the title of his latest book, *To Mend the World.** For this theologian is also an activist of a kind, intent on lending the strength of his intellect to the healing of the wounded Jewish psyche after the traumas of this century. In this particular endeavor, the positions worked out by Fackenheim the philosopher are at one, and are meant to be at one, with the intuitive feelings of the Jewish people at large in the post-Holocaust world. *This* Emil Fackenheim is the author of a now famous formulation concerning the Jewish vocation after Auschwitz that has, indeed, given new heart to many people who have sensed in it an echo of their own soul's conviction: *"Jews are forbidden to grant posthumous victories to Hitler."*†

While Fackenheim must ultimately be assessed in his full status as a systematic philosopher, I mean here to bypass some of the subtleties of his analysis, with its array of technical terms and its jockeying among the great figures of Western philosophy, and go straight to the heart of his position. To him, the basic human situation in our day, to which the thinker must address himself, is that of the denizen of a Nazi concentration camp. The Holocaust is, to him, a kind of revelation; it has revealed what the world is really like. In the baleful light of this revelation, mankind must seek to orient itself in the future. More correctly (since the creative role of time and history is important in Fackenheim's thought), the Holocaust has revealed the world not as it always was, but as it must now forever be.

The Holocaust is thus, for Fackenheim, an entirely unique event, which marks a new epoch not merely in Jewish, but in human, history. It has revealed possibilities of evil that are quite beyond anything previously envisaged, and that cannot be contained or explained by previous categories, such as those of the Ninth of Ab, by which the destruction of the ancient Temple was accommodated to Jewish belief in the mercy and justice of God. No theodicy, he believes, by which God's behavior may be vindicated, and no anthropology upholding the essential goodness of man, can survive this event. The Holocaust thus comprises a metaphysical confrontation with the abyss of evil, a meeting between man and reality on a scale of profundity hitherto adumbrated only in the great religious myths—the meeting of Abraham with God's inexplicably cruel demand that he sacrifice his son Isaac, or the meeting of man, God, and the abyss of suffering at the crucifixion. From the event of the Holocaust can come only two things—either complete despair, and a decision to abandon the human experiment altogether, or a new commitment which amounts to a new dimension of living. In the case of the Jews, however, this new commitment may be found to have sufficient continuity with old ways of thought and life to be called a fresh stage within Judaism itself.

HYAM MACCOBY is librarian and lecturer at the Leo Baeck College in London. He is the author of *Revolution in Judea: Jesus and the Jewish Resistance* (Taplinger) and *Judaism on Trial* (Fairleigh Dickinson).

* *To Mend the World: Foundations of Future Jewish Thought,* Schocken, 352 pp., $22.50 (hardcover), $12.95 (paper).

† "Jewish Faith and the Holocaust," COMMENTARY, August 1968.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In this turning point between despair and continuance, Fackenheim finds two events which can act as the basis of a renewal of faith. One is on the level of the individual: it is the discovery by inmates in the concentration and death camps of Nazi Europe that in the worst extremity, under assault by behavior which aimed at depriving them of all self-respect and sense of human worth, they still found the strength to withstand such assault and, by understanding what was being aimed at, to nullify that aim. This was a revelation equal to the revelation on Mount Sinai, and one that could be set against that other revelation of the Holocaust, itself epoch-making in a negative sense—namely, that human beings *could* be reduced to a robot-like status in which all possibility of human choice had been obliterated.

The second great revelation was on the communal scale: it was the emergence of the state of Israel. A people that, having been rebuffed by man and God, should according to every rational consideration have turned its face to the wall, instead found within itself the vitality to create itself anew, to revive its ancient language and reconstitute itself in its ancient land. Here Fackenheim turns a tired and suspect platitude on its head: instead of saying that Israel is the compensation for the Holocaust, or the silver lining sure to be found in even the blackest cloud, he sees the emergence of Israel as the instinctive and creative response of an entire community to its apparently final engulfment by the forces of destruction. There was nothing in the least determined or inevitable or compensatory about this response, which had all the unexpectedness of the metaphysically real, i.e., what is not given but *happens*. (For Fackenheim, the hallmark of the real is precisely this quality of "surprise.")

There is much in Fackenheim's reaction to the Holocaust that is both true and moving. More than any other writer, he brings out the uniqueness of the Holocaust, and refutes the attempts that have been made to assimilate it to other horrific massacres, such as the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, or the sufferings of Hiroshima. These events can be explained on the basis of rational political motivations (the Armenian claims to independence were a genuine nuisance to the Turks, for example). Only in the case of the Jews was a people chosen for extermination not because of anything they did or claimed, or were thought to have done or claimed, but simply because they *were*, a people whose very existence was considered an evil which it was meritorious to annihilate, in an action analogous to the eradication of malaria.

Moreover, the uniqueness of the Holocaust is shown in the desire not only to kill the victims, but to demoralize, degrade, and humiliate them in every possible way. The ingenuity applied to this end was astounding. Nothing in history has been like a Nazi death camp, with its creation of a vast community of suffering and its proliferation of techniques—including covering inmates in excrement—by which the victims' torture could be protracted and concentrated. Here the analogy between killing Jews and killing germs breaks down. No one wants to torture a germ before killing it. Rats may be massacred, but no one would force them to live through an ordeal of filth and emaciation before they die. There is only one possible analogy in human experience, or rather in human imagination, and that is with the supreme place of torture: Hell, as created by Dante and other Christian writers and preachers.

Fackenheim, however, does not draw this analogy, and the fact that he does not may be linked with certain weaknesses of comprehension in his otherwise unsparing facing of the horror.

WHY did the Nazis so faithfully and painstakingly recreate on earth the Inferno that has long engaged the Christian imagination? The answer lies in the Christian background of the Holocaust. This is an aspect that Fackenheim, with all his bravery, does not truly confront. He sees the Holocaust as an upsurge of previously unimagined evil, and thus neglects to place it in its historical context. While one may applaud Fackenheim's existentialist philosophy of surprise, insofar as it leads him to reject all facile deterministic explanations—such as the attempts to interpret the Holocaust in terms of economics, or xenophobia, or the vicissitudes of German history —one must protest when this leads to the abandonment of historical explanation.

What we have to understand is the special kind of hatred that motivates anti-Semitism, and which found its ultimate expression in the Holocaust. What kind of enmity is it that cannot even be satisfied by killing, but must search for a complex form of mental, spiritual, and physical torture, in which the victim is reduced below the level of the beasts and dies in a condition of despair and self-loathing? One SS man, questioned at Nuremberg, gave an answer: it was necessary to reduce the Jews to a contemptible state so that the killers could proceed without qualms.

Fackenheim rightly rejects this answer as specious. It was, on the contrary, the hatred itself that motivated the procedure. Transformed into a loathsome, gibbering, excrement-covered creature, the Jew was revealed in his true form, just as he appeared in the anti-Semitic vision—the form which he was usually cunning enough to disguise through the pretense of culture and civilization. It was like the transformation of Lamia, by which a beautiful witch suddenly assumes her true serpent form; or like the stories of handsome strangers who, by the correct magic formula, are compelled to show their essential shape as devils with forked tails. It is true that the killing could then proceed without moral qualms, but only because its essential correctness had now been made plain: to kill Jews was a moral duty, a proof of virtuousness.

Of course there are other, supplementary ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

planations. There was obviously much opportunity for sadism, and the perverted personality was given license beyond his wildest fantasies. And the particular forms of sadism that were employed owed much to a specific German psychology, with its obsessive tidiness and cleanliness hiding an extreme preoccupation with excrement (shown also by the peculiarly German genre of cloacal jokes). But again, it was the received idea of the evil of the Jews that enabled the Germans to turn them into the image of *their* own vision of evil, based, naturally, on their own specific pattern of secret desires. While the special disgrace of the German nation can never be obliterated, there was a wider, more general, disgrace in which the Germans formed only a subsidiary part. The Germans contributed some characteristic touches of their own to the idea of the Jews as evil, but they did not invent that idea.

The wider cultural unit, in which the image of the Jew as demonic had been developed over many centuries by a systematic program of indoctrination, was Christendom. Hardly anything in the Nazi vilification of the Jews was new; indeed, some medieval accusations against the Jews as subhuman vampires were even viler than Nazi propaganda. True, the individual cruelties of the Nazis were unimaginably horrific; but were the individual cruelties perpetrated during the Polish massacres of the 17th century—when, for example, the Cossacks slit open the bellies of Jewish women, put in live cats and sewed the bellies up again—any less horrific? Was the hatred behind such conduct, though admittedly less organized, any the less intense? The Nazi episode was not some sudden ahistorical explosion of evil, or an atavistic return to a forgotten barbarism; pogroms and blood-libel accusations show an unbroken historical connection in Christendom, linking the Nazis to the massacres at the time of the Crusades and the Black Death.

At the same time, Christendom was the *only* area in which such things took place. The anti-Jewish activities of Islam were of an entirely different order, while in India and China, the substantial Jewish communities never experienced anti-Semitism at all, and lived completely at peace with their neighbors, who showed none of the "resentment against Jewish exclusivism" which has been so often adduced to explain anti-Semitism, but merely regarded the Jews as one more religious group with the usual differentiating rites, food taboos, and festivals.

Thus the belief of Fackenheim and others that the Nazi Holocaust is a problem and a crisis for humanity as a whole is wrong. It is a problem and a crisis for Christendom alone; the area of responsibility is not smaller than Christendom (i.e., not exclusively Germany) but also not greater than Christendom.

IF WE consider the anti-Semitism that culminated in the Holocaust as a Christian phenomenon, we must ask what it was in Christianity that conduced to such a result. Fackenheim does not entirely ignore this question. He clearly agrees with the "supersessionist" theory of Christian anti-Semitism, most powerfully expressed in Rosemary Ruether's book, *Faith and Fratricide*. According to this theory, it was the desire of the Christian Church to supersede Judaism that gave rise to the anti-Jewish passages found in the New Testament and in the literature of the Church. The rejection of Jesus by the Jews was regarded as a wicked act of betrayal, and the previous history of the Jews, as described in the more censorious parts of the Old Testment, was invoked to show that the Jews had *always* been a wicked people, who had killed all the prophets sent to them by God. Thus the prophets of Scripture could be appropriated for Christianity as proto-Christians (their Jewishness being thereby denied), while the term "Jew" became identified with everything evil denounced in the Old Testament.

The remedy, according to Ruether and others, is very simple: Christianity must cease to assert its exclusive claim to truth, and must acknowledge that Judaism is a valid religion that has a right to continue; it was not "superseded" by Christianity. Since many Christians nowadays are prepared to concede this, the problem of Christian anti-Semitism is in principle solved. The anti-Jewish sections of the New Testament, once they are recognized as part of the supersessionist tactic, will be quietly ignored or even, eventually, excised. Meanwhile, Judaism must repay the compliment and acknowledge the validity of Christianity as a separate revelation, with its own theology centered on the mystery of the crucifixion. Judaism and Christianity (and Islam) are parallel streams of revelation, which, so long as they eschew "fanaticism," and cease to vilify each other, can continue to work out their destinies in peace.

Fackenheim is so sure of this that he spends very little time on the Christian origins of anti-Semitism, and clearly does not consider this angle of much importance for the study of the Holocaust. On the contrary, he is most sympathetic toward the theological problems posed to the salvation doctrine of Christianity by the "radical evil" of the Holocaust. His aim in his latest book is to approach the possibility of a *tikkun*, a "mending," of the universe in the circumstances of cosmic disaster or "breaking of the vessels" brought about by the Holocaust (Fackenheim's use here of kabbalistic terminology is a new feature in his thinking); the dilemma, Fackenheim thinks, affects Jews and Christians alike.

All this, in my opinion, is naive. Christian anti-Semitism involves far more than the question of supersessionism. If that were the whole matter, there would be no difference between Christianity and Islam with regard to anti-Jewish feeling. For Islam is just as much a supersessionist religion as Christianity—with the difference that Islam is *doubly* supersessionist, since it claims to supersede

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

both Judaism and Christianity. Certainly, hostility to the Jews in Islam has not been negligible, beginning with the Koran itself. Muhammad fought against the Jewish tribes of Arabia; and the Jewish refusal to accept Islam, which was much resented, was later repaid in a policy of deliberate humiliation. But this hostility was no greater than that expressed by Muslims toward Christians, and did not result in the demonization so characteristic of Christian anti-Semitism. There was an understandable rivalry between conflicting religious claims, but none of the metaphysical hatred of Jews that is endemic in Christendom. It is true that in recent years Muslims, out of political motives, have begun to demonize the Jews, but in doing so they have had to draw their material from Christian sources —for example, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the blood-libel accusations.

THE fact that Fackenheim and his ecumenical precursors (like Franz Rosenzweig) are unable to face is that Christian anti-Semitism derives not from some accidental and inessential layer of Christianity but from its central doctrine and myth, the crucifixion itself. It is not that Judaism and Christianity are rival religions seeking to discredit each other in the eyes of possible clients. It is not even that they are rival theologies or rival philosophies. It is something much deeper than that. The Jews play an important, even a vital, part in the Christian myth. Without them, the *dramatis personae* of the Christian cosmic story would not be complete. And the important thing about Christianity in this respect is not its theology (as Jewish theologians want to think) but precisely its element of myth, perhaps the most powerful myth the world has ever known. We need to appreciate Christianity not as an existentialist essay on the problem of suffering, but as a breathtaking drama designed to lift the burden of fear and guilt from those who believe. When we understand Christianity as such a drama, we begin to become aware of psychological forces that were strong enough to help lead to the Holocaust, and we also become aware of a possible therapy that might nullify or combat those forces without the adoption of a philosophy of resistance to incomprehensible evil—a philosophy very close to despair.

It is often said, inaccurately, that the Jews act as "scapegoats" in Christianity. But in the Christian myth it is Jesus himself who is the scapegoat, taking upon himself the sins of the world. The role of the Jews in this drama is a different one: that of bringing about the necessary death of the scapegoat. To grasp the meaning of this role of betrayal and execution, we have to look back into the history and prehistory of mankind, where we find many parallels in early religion to the role played by the Jews in the Christian myth.* From prehistoric times, a tribe faced with disaster resorted to the killing of its best and most innocent man to avert the anger of the god. In Christianity, the crisis which makes the sacrifice necessary is not a plague or famine or military threat, but the condemnation of all mankind to hell by an angry Father-god. This is a Pauline misinterpretation, influenced by Gnostic dualism, of the Jewish story of the fall of Adam, and it reflects a deep pessimism (possibly resulting from the dislocation and disorientation caused by the militaristic empires of Macedonia and Rome). Judaism itself never regarded the world as evil, or as in the thrall of Satan, and thus never required a sacrificial Savior to save mankind from crisis. For Christianity, the cruel sacrificial death of Jesus was a necessity, and the Jews were the evil instruments by which this was brought about.

The Jews in the scheme are thus the earthly agents of the cosmic powers of evil. They are the deicides who by their wickedness unwittingly save mankind, but who are thus doubly damned, both because the death of Christ is not efficacious for *them* and because they have crowned a long career of sin with the greatest of all sins. The mark of Cain is on them, and they are condemned to the loss of their land and Temple, to long wanderings and other sufferings. They excite awe as well as hate, for they are the representatives of a semi-divine figure, Satan. It is this combination of awe and hate that is the hallmark of anti-Semitism, distinguishing it from all other forms of xenophobia.

All this is quite remote from Fackenheim, who sees the crucifixion in theological terms as a symbol of the condition of man, never as an urgent *technique* of redemption from hell through vicarious suffering, a device by which the believer can relieve himself of the unbearable burden of responsibility for his deeds. As for Christian anti-Semitism, Fackenheim is content to explain it as the outcome of religious rivalry and "fanaticism." I have called this naive, yet the naiveté is of the kind that only sophisticated people display. Unsophisticated people, whether Christians or Jews, know well why the Jews are hated in Christendom. After World War II, when people in Europe were asked why they did not protest the massacre of the Jews, time and again they gave the answer, "They are the Christ-killers, aren't they?"

In one wish-fulfilling Christian legend, that of the Wandering Jew, the Jews accept their role willingly until the time of their release at the Second Coming. Mostly, however, the Jews were regarded as obstinately unrepentant, always longing to repeat their crime; the blood libel was the most horrific version of this idea. In general, the Christian picture of the Jew became more demonized as time went on; it took many centuries of constant indoctrination, especially by the lower clergy, for this picture to become ingrained in the popular consciousness. (The appalling diatribes of St. Chrysostom against the Jews, for example, were

* For a fuller explication, see my forthcoming book, *The Sacred Executioner* (Thames & Hudson).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

motivated by the fact that at that time, in the 4th century, the common Christian people still persisted in treating Jews with friendliness.) The role of the Jews was such that any sign of happiness or prosperity among them gave rise to intolerable anxiety among Christians, for if the Jews did not suffer, who would bear the guilt of the sacrifice of Jesus? The survival of the Jews despite their sufferings was regarded as miraculous proof of their role as deicides; for the long, God-protected life of the sacred executioner, as in the case of Cain (to whom the Jews were constantly compared by Christian theologians) was one of his essential features.

GIVEN this extraordinary campaign of hate, incessantly sustained over long ages, and fueled by a psychological and soteriological need, the "mystery" of the Holocaust ceases to seem such a mystery. There are good historical reasons for the Holocaust. The situation of the Jews as the pariah nation of Christendom; the existence of a limitless fund of paranoia about them, always ready to be tapped by demagogues in search of power; the continuance into the post-Christian era of deeply-implanted fantasies about the Jews—these factors only required the trigger of circumstances to activate a huge outburst of violence. And a further factor, it must be noted was the release afforded by Nazism from all vestiges of the restraint imposed by traditional Christian morality, which had hitherto acted as a counterweight to Christian mythology.

The conditions thus all existed to make a Holocaust possible. The historian Yehuda Bauer is correct in saying (in *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective*) that the Holocaust was unique not in any metaphysical sense but only in the sense that it had not yet happened in world history. I am surprised that Fackenheim, though he quotes Bauer with great respect, shows no sign of agreeing with, or even grasping, Bauer's point here.

To see the Holocaust as the natural (though not the inevitable) outcome of previous religious history in Christendom leaves room for action in the way of remedy. If there is to be a campaign of re-education, it needs to be led above all by a return of the repressed, i.e., by a real understanding of Christendom's irrational prejudice against Jews, its determination always to think the worst of them, and (we may add, in the light of the world response to the Beirut massacre) to react to any putative dereliction of duty on the part of some Jews by instantaneous reversion to a demonic theory of the Jews as a whole. The Christian doctrine of atonement, in which the Jews play the role of cosmic villains, needs to be fully explained in its own mythological terms, not tarted up as respectable-sounding theology. No program of Jewish-Christian ecumenism should compromise with this doctrine by allowing its theological validity, since its historical results have been appalling. Here Jews need to exercise *more* "fanaticism" (to use Fackenheim's term), not less.

Such a program of reeducation is not only appropriate for Christians; it is also appropriate, perhaps even more so, for post-Christians, those who have discarded Christian dogma but unconsciously retain Christian demonology. Both the Nazis and the anti-Semites of the New Left come under this heading, as do many well-meaning humanists who show otherwise unaccountable prejudice against Jews.

In Fackenheim's view of the Holocaust as an ineffable, inexplicable event there is no plan for such gradual, probing remedies, based on the broadening of historical understanding (the "history" involved being primarily not political or economic, but the history of a myth or of a cultural pattern). Fackenheim demands that the Holocaust be understood philosophically, as a manifestation of radical evil that is part of the metaphysical fabric of Being itself. What alternative is there, he asks, to such an understanding? Has not the Holocaust shown us a depth of evil previously unimagined? We must therefore think in terms of an entire universe in need of *tikkun*, a labor incumbent upon Judasim and Christianity alike.

Such a theology can indeed be found in the more extreme forms of (Lurianic) Kabbalah, but it represents a break from classical Judaism, the teaching of which is that evil is not an independent metaphysical principle but a psychological tendency or "inclination." If the Holocaust can be shown to have human causes, historical and psychological, a dualistic theology of this kind is not forced upon us. For it is natural and understandable, without resort to new theological patterns, that the free will with which man is endowed can have, as one of its results, a perverted communal program of indoctrination by which human beings, over a long period of time, become desensitized to morality in a given area, or suffer a reversal of moral values. When a community has been taught over centuries that it is weakness to be kind to Jews, and that it is virtuous to persecute them, it is only a step (albeit a large one) to Himmler's notorious speech to SS officers in which he lectured them on the moral imperative of stifling their feelings of nausea about the mass killings.

To see the Holocaust, as Emil Fackenheim does, as a revelatory event, exposing the basic situation of humanity, is to give it far too much centrality. The Holocaust is *not* a revelatory event, but on the contrary the end product of a false turn taken by one sector of humanity; and that wrong turn must not be elevated into a metaphysical ingredient of the universe. Rather it must be historically analyzed and corrected.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Scenes from the Cedar Bar

Lionel Abel

I CAME back from Paris in the fall of 1951, and found that New York had changed in the three years I had been away. People in Europe were speaking then about the imminent death of the old continent's culture, but in New York something very different was being proposed about American culture, American politics, and especially about American painting.

An art club had been formed, which had its headquarters in a loft on Eighth Street in Greenwich Village, and to which some of the best painters in the city, among them Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Esteban Vicente, and Philip Guston came regularly, as did any number of still unknown young painters who, because of the club, were able to make contact with mature artists already recognized for their skills. Thus it was that Gandy Brodie and Robert Rauschenberg found encouragement for the developments they later were to introduce into the world of the New York School. And at the painters' club, in the excitement over the new paintings being produced and the feeling that finally the city had the kind of art that was quite worthy of it, the meeting of the already established and the scarcely known, the already famous and those merely hoping to become that, the skilled, the semi-skilled, and the unskilled, who, however, had aspirations, produced an atmosphere like that around a race track (I am deliberately using the metaphor Joyce used about Paris in the late 20's and early 30's; he said that because of the atmosphere there, it was the only city in which he could write).

In fact, the painters who came to the club were treated by most of the people there, who were not themselves painters but admirers of painting, like horses moving impatiently, sometimes hysterically, to the starting gate at the first of the three great race tracks from which sometimes triple winners emerge. A kind of miracle had taken place in New York City which had transformed the painters' club on Eighth Street east of University Place into something like Lexington, Kentucky, on the eve of the Derby. And it's to be noted that the social arrangements at that time for bringing young writers or aspirants in writing into contact with their elders and those who had assured positions in the literary world, had fallen off. There was a generational conflict already in the literary world, such as had not existed prior to that, and there was no such conflict among the painters. Moreover, the painters had remained bohemian in their way of life while the writers who had achieved some success strove for respectability and had moved to uptown apartments.

I suppose what I have described were the organic conditions that made possible the breakthrough in painting in the late 40's and early 50's of William Baziotes (whom my friend Matta, the Surrealist painter, had always singled out to me as a fine painter—though he always said Baziotes's neckties showed there was something wrong with his color), also, of course, Jackson Pollock, de Kooning, Guston, Vicente, and all the other painters who contributed to what one critic, Tom Hess, called "Abstract Expressionism" and another, Harold Rosenberg, called "Action Painting." Suppose one asked, though, whether any forms were produced or discovered by the painters like the multi-planed surfaces which the Cubists favored, like the dot or the splash of the Impressionists, like the stain which da Vinci had said five hundred years ago could have all the beauty necessary for a work of art. Was anything of that sort turned up by Abstract Expressionism? Those friends of mine who know art history tell me no, that what was new in the paintings produced during that period was the enthusiasm with which forms discovered in Europe from 1905 through the 1920's had been rediscovered. In other words, New York City had provided a new, organic situation for forms of painting which Paris and the Parisian school could no longer nurture, and which had some of their richest, wildest, most fantastic developments in what ten years before would have seemed the unlikeliest place—New York City.

ON SOME evening in some month of 1952, at some party in someone's apartment in the Village, Tom Hess, who was then at work on the book in which he described the new painters as Abstract Expressionists, asked me to give a talk on whatever topic I chose, at

LIONEL ABEL, playwright and critic, is professor emeritus of English literature at SUNY-Buffalo. The present article is drawn from his memoir, *The Intellectual Follies, 1929-1979*, another section of which, "The Surrealists in New York," appeared in our October 1981 issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Eighth Street art club. And I agreed to give the talk. Let me recall that evening: I was walking down Eighth Street toward the club, and two persons I met on the way, and whom I stopped to greet, urged me not to go on to the club to give my talk. The first was Robert Motherwell, whom I had not seen during the years I'd been in France, and whom I was glad to run into for he always talked intelligently about painting. As a matter of fact, I think he was the first person to herald the importance of Jackson Pollock, at least to me. I told him I was going to the club to lecture, and I think I even suggested that he come too, if only to hear my remarks. It turned out that he was not only unwilling to be part of the audience, he also wanted me not to appear before it. I said to him, "I can't do that. I've given my word to Tom Hess." Said Motherwell, "You know what the club is, don't you?" I said I wasn't familiar with it, but understood it was a new institution in the city, and important to the artists. "I'll tell you what it is," said Motherwell. "It's Bill de Kooning's political machine." So according to Motherwell, whatever I thought I was doing in giving the talk, I was in fact serving the political purpose of a rival painter.

I left Motherwell on Eighth Street and Sixth Avenue and went on toward the club. But on the corner of MacDougal Street and Eighth, I ran into another painter whom I had not seen for quite some time. This was Attilio Salemme, whom I had known in the Trotskyist movement. Attilio was the brother of a commercially successful academic sculptor, Antonio Salemme, whom I had known long before I met Attilio. Antonio Salemme was bourgeois, conventional, and rich, and Attilio in all respects was just the opposite. Apparently he had for some years been painting seriously, and I was told, not by him, but by others, that the French ambassador to the UN, M. Laugier, had bought some of his pictures and singled him out as the most interesting of New York City's new painters.

After my encounter with Attilio that evening, I did find occasion to see some of his paintings, and I was very struck by them. I think there is one in the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection. What makes Salemme's pictures interesting (this is a personal view, for I do not know what critics or connoisseurs have said about him) is their outstanding ing oddity. Little of the painter's craft is involved in drawing the columns of colors he sets alongside each other against a white background, so you do not admire his pictures for their craft or skill, or even for any kind of thought either about the art of painting or about any aspect of real life. Let me put it this way: with most paintings, one feels that if one had the skill, the artistic feeling, or the knowledge of art, one might oneself have made that particular still life, that landscape, that abstraction. Salemme's pictures are pictures you know instantly you would never have made or wanted to make even if you had the skill to do so, and hardly any skill, it seems to me, could have been involved in their production. There is some element of this oddness, this otherness, in a good deal of modern art. But in Salemme's pictures one felt at once this otherness as oddly genuine and genuinely odd; certainly it was not the result of any deliberate effort to be odd on the painter's part. Let us remember that Georg Lukács had made *specialness* the main category of aesthetic value. In any case, that was what I thought of Salemme's pictures when I saw them some months after I had run into him.

I told him that I was going to the club to give a talk, adding, "I just saw Bob Motherwell, and he urged me not to go." "He's quite right," said Attilio. And then I told him what Motherwell had said, that the club was Bill de Kooning's political machine. "I agree with him," said Attilio. To which I responded, looking at my watch, "If we go on discussing this, I'll be late."

So I went on to the art club and gave my talk.

Bill de Kooning was in the audience, and I think what I said in my talk disturbed him as it did several of the other painters there, though I had not intended to be especially provocative. I said, speaking as a layman, not as an art critic or connoisseur, that when I had first become aware of modern painting, I was often thrilled by pictures which were modern simply because they were that, quite apart from any superior aesthetic quality they might be said to have. Now, I said, I feel differently. I get a special pleasure from looking at paintings that are *not* modern. And if I look at a painting that is modern, I ask it to prove its aesthetic worth.

Well, this was not the right thing to say to members of the Eighth Street art club in 1952. The painters there were involved in making modern paintings, but I think few of them thought the word "modern" the right qualifier of what they were doing. They knew—and they were right in this judgment—that what they were doing was rather different from what had been done in modern art before them, so that to place their worth under the same rubric with the art which had gone before theirs was a misunderstanding of their effort, their motivation, their values. John Meyers, an old friend who had been managing editor of the little magazine *Instead* when I got it out, and whom I had known on the staff of *View*, was particularly upset. He was involved then in setting up the Tibor de Nagy gallery, which exhibited some of the finest new American painters, notably Grace Hartigan, Larry Rivers, and Robert Goodnough, and it must have been very upsetting to him to hear that paintings were extended a certain emotional credit simply insofar as they were *not* modern. It was modern paintings that he was interested in showing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SONIA ORWELL, George Orwell's widow (later Sonia Pitt-Rivers), when she wanted to make sure that those around would listen carefully to what she had to say, would dramatically fling her waves of heavy blonde hair back over her shoulders and announce, "The thing is that. . . ." The procedure was always effective. I once heard her announce to Robert Lowell on the subject of contemporary American poetry, "The thing is that . . ."; and he listened with maximum attention. So I am going to borrow her phrase to tell what it was about the Cedar Bar on University Place just off Eighth Street, only a block or so from the art club, that made it remarkable. The thing is that . . . in the Cedar Bar, ideas were in the air. How remarkable that is one will perhaps realize in reflecting on this fact: ideas have not often been in the air in New York City. New York has hardly ever been the place where original ideas were first formulated or expressed. It has been the place ideas visited first, having been generated somewhere else. Also, it has been the place where ideas were welcomed. In general, in the late 19th century, and the early part of our own, ideas relating to art or manners were originated in Paris, first of all, but perhaps also in London, or in Vienna, and only after that arrived in New York, from where they continued years later on to Chicago and to Los Angeles.

Philosophical ideas were in the air in Freiburg and Vienna in the 30's and in Oxford during the 50's. And all these ideas, of logical positivism, phenomenology, and the philosophy of language, finally made their way to this country, but not to New York City in any direct sense. They came to the colleges and universities in New York City, but also, and simultaneously, to the colleges and universities over the rest of the country. So that the University of California at Berkeley is in no sense more philosophically backward than are Columbia, Harvard, or Yale. And the ideas of structuralism developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, and others in Paris have also crossed the Atlantic, but have made no direct connection with what is thought or felt in New York City except for what is felt or thought by its university students. The sad fact is that New York City, too, is today almost as bankrupt intellectually as are the provincial cities of the country, for ideas no longer hit the centers of city life, but go directly to the campuses, where they are academicized by the various faculties.

But in the late 40's and 50's this had not yet occurred. The existentialist ideas of Sartre entered into the consciousness of city dwellers in Manhattan and, I think, had some effect upon the painters too. However, the ideas that were in the air in the 50's, at the Eighth Street art club and the Cedar Bar, even if influenced to some degree by existentialist notions, were fundamentally ideas about the art of painting. It was the ideas of the painters and not of critics, connoisseurs, or art historians that were in the air, and you felt this as soon as you stepped into the Cedar Bar.

In a famous article written during the 50's, Harold Rosenberg said it was a scandal that American intellectuals had ignored the development of Abstract Expressionism or, as he called it, Action Painting. In fact, he was one of the few writers (Frank O'Hara was another) who ventured into the Cedar Bar, though neither came there often.

FOR my own part, I must say that the experience of ideas in the air is a very exciting one, and I think I can say, too, that the only time since the 30's I have ever been aware of such a phenomenon was during the 50's in the art club and at the Cedar Bar. Now while this was exciting and stimulating, it also had a negative side for one who was not himself a painter. For you were stimulated by ideas that had little relation to your concerns, and if these ideas actually inspired, the case was even worse, since the feeling of inspiration brought with it the conviction that it would result in absolutely nothing. Paul Valéry, in an essay on poetry and abstract thought, tells of an experience he had had of musical inspiration which should have resulted in a score; however, he was too lacking in the knowledge of musical composition to produce one. Well, that's what it was like at the Cedar Bar: one not a painter was stimulated, but what was one who did not paint to do about it? So there was nothing scandalous about the fact that writers did not frequent the bar. The real question I had to ask myself was, Why did I go there?

I went because some of the painters had been friends of mine for years, and because the bar was the one indisputably bohemian center in Greenwich Village, probably New York City. But since the ideas that were in the air were those of painting, and since these ideas had little relation to my own concerns, there were bound to be misunderstandings in all the discussions in which I participated.

But I want to insist on this point: there was something living in that bar which gave vitality to the ideas expressed there. Once again, a set of organic relations can be separated from the formal structure to which they give vitality. Something had made the painters who came to the art club and the Cedar Bar at that time similarly enthusiastic about the employment in painting of non-figurative forms. What caused their excitement for these forms to that degree at exactly that time, I cannot say. This is something for the art historians. But it was the conjunction of the excitement with these forms that made for the life of the bar.

And so I think that by this time, one of our poets should certainly have written, in verses we would feel worth memorizing, of what things were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like in that bar. "Arms and the man I sing," Virgil began his epic. What would the verses we are still waiting for about the Cedar Bar have taken as their theme? Brawls and the brush, perhaps, for the Cedar was famous both for the painters who frequented it, and the fights they engaged in there. Jackson Pollock, who seldom came, for he lived in Long Island, outside the city, but who when he did come to New York was certain to drop in at the bar, gave it, I think, the atmosphere that stayed with it until the end, long after Pollock was dead and could no longer carry on as was his wont.

An ordinary bar it seemed at first, anyway, the first time I was in it, and that, of course, is what made the place's fortune. An ordinary New York City bar of the 50's, grimy, smoke-filled, noisy, filled with the drunk, the foolish, and the famous—though even those who were already famous in the early 50's were not yet rich. Even Jackson Pollock was not yet rich, though everyone knew he would be, and Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning were not yet rich, but they were famous, which meant that they were already sought after by the rich and did not have to choose their friends from the poor alone. The bar was open late into the morning hours, and the painters were generally there, some of them, anyway. As I have said, literary people did not go to the Cedar Bar. In fact, some writers and editors deliberately avoided the bar because it was full of painters and painters' talk. I remember asking the editor of *Partisan Review*, Philip Rahv, to go there with me for a drink, and he refused. He didn't want to mix with the painters. "They have a trade-union consciousness," he said, "and I'm not a member of the union."

In one sense he was quite right about this. The painters did form an elite circle which regarded those not of it as against it, and by the way, they weren't so friendly to one another. Ad Reinhardt expressed it this way to me once: "We go there to meet the very people we hate most, the other painters." Actually, I don't think Ad hated any of the painters, but some of them may have hated him, for Barnett Newman hauled him into court for having published a witticism about him, and the fights I saw taking place in the bar were often quite violent. I saw Franz Kline shoe-whipped by his girlfriend in a most savage fashion just a few years before his death, and Bill de Kooning told me that just before the place closed down he was involved in a fracas with the critic Clement Greenberg. Clem, according to Bill, had come up to him as he sat at the bar and made the accusation: "Why do you tell people that I got my ideas from you?" Bill said that he realized Clem intended to hit him, and so he thought it best to get in the first blow. He hit Greenberg on the jaw and then the two were separated.

It was not an attractive bar in any normal sense of that term, but the painters came there, and this made others come. Probably the closest that we had to the Mermaid Tavern was the Algonquin Bar and Luchow's in the days of the *American Mercury*, and we certainly did not have cafés like the Flore or the Deux Magots or the grand cafés of Montparnasse frequented by writers and painters. But in the 50's there was the Cedar. It was drab, grimy, and chaotic, but beneath the noise and the hum of conversation, the talk about art and by the artists—by Philip Guston, Franz Kline, Bill de Kooning, George Spaventa, and Mercedes Matter, herself a painter of quality, though she preferred to be known as one who hung out with painters—beneath all the talk and noise and often desperate remarks, there was an extraordinary optimism, quite American in fact, about painting, and most especially, American painting.

As I've already indicated, the Cedar Bar was not in appearance different from any number of other bars in Greenwich Village at that time. Incidentally, it was not dominated by a television screen, as bars almost everywhere now are, and the absence of television made the presence of the painters more emphatic. What was significant about the bar and made it different from all others could hardly have been guessed by anyone who did not know those who frequented it. Should George Bellows's painting of a prize fight have hung on one of the walls? Not really. It would have been appropriate there in view of the many fights and the many painters, but the very idea of appropriateness was not one congenial to the painters themselves. They did not want to mix on their canvases colors that would conform to any already established taste. At least this is what some of them said, notably Franz Kline.

Often, when I recall the bar and its lack of saliency for my own descriptive purpose, I'm reminded of a painter I knew slightly in Paris, a remarkable painter, but one whom one would never single out from a crowd as in any way extraordinary. This was Wols, said to be the illegitimate son of Walther Rathenau, the German statesman assassinated by a proto-Nazi under the Weimar Republic. Nicola Chiaromonte, the Italian writer, pointed Wols out to me one day as we passed the Café Flore, where he was sitting, a most unremarkable looking man. Wols's wife, who knew Chiaromonte, got up from her table, came up to Nicola, and asked for money to buy Wols a drink. We both contributed something in support of what Chiaromonte told me was killing Wols, his drinking habit. Chiaromonte added, "He is the best painter in Paris today, and everybody knows it." Everybody knew it, but no one did anything for him. No dealer wanted to show his work, no checks were flourished to get him to turn over any of his already finished works. But after Wols's death, in 1951, I believe, André Malraux announced that Wols was more original than Pollock, and in fact that Pollock had taken his whole manner of painting from the Parisian.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The charge is quite unjust and does not reflect well on Malraux's judgment or motives. It has, of course, boosted the prices of Wols's paintings, but I cannot help thinking as I recall him, that had he been living in New York in 1951, his wife would not have had to beg for money for liquor from passers-by. Wols would have been in the Cedar Bar, sitting with Kline, Pollock, de Kooning, Guston, Vicente, and Spaventa. People would have made much of him. They even would have urged him not to drink, and it was my impression that his excessive drinking in Paris, though this required money, was at least partly due to lack of money, that is, money obtained by his painting, not by his wife's appeals.

Had the unremarkable looking Wols been found in the 50's in the nondescript Cedar Bar favored by the painters, he would, I believe, have been one of the main centers of interest. Dealers would have sought him out, and they did not seek him out in Paris. Someone would have compared him to Pollock and this would have brought a comment from Jackson. And the episode would have provided matter for an article in *Art News* or some other journal. From which we can see something of what it means to have a really creative art movement. For certain artists the difference between a creative scene and its contrary may be the difference between life and death.

WHEN ideas are in the air, people become more daring, sometimes to the point of rudeness. Without the ideas expressed by the Dadaists, would anyone have dared paint a mustache on the Mona Lisa? And the bar, as I've indicated, was a place where rude words were spoken and, in drunkenness, blows struck. Also, parties were arranged there with the expectation that rude words would be spoken and blows exchanged. I have in mind one particular dinner party at the New Jersey farm of a German professor of philosophy named Henzler, who had become friendly with Bill de Kooning and was trying to get him to take up some of Heidegger's ideas.

Here are the persons Henzler invited to his dinner party: Bill and Elaine de Kooning, Mercedes Matter, Franz Kline, Philip Guston, George Spaventa, Milton Resnick, and several others. It was to be a big affair.

I don't know how we all got out to Henzler's farm, and I don't know who brought Elaine, who had a broken leg, which was in a cast, but I do remember some of the details of the dinner party once all the guests were assembled. I don't know what Henzler had intended for that affair—an intellectual discussion of Heidegger's ideas? Perhaps, but this was not to be. He had a good dinner served us, too, and fine Moselle wine from Germany, which I don't think the painters appreciated. They had one thing in mind, though, which they very quickly achieved; it was to transform the rather peaceful atmosphere of Henzler's dinner table into something like the brawling, noisy atmosphere, charged with insults and epithets, of the Cedar Bar. They seemed to have gone all the way out to New Jersey just to prove that they had never left Eighth Street and University Place. They ate Henzler's roast lamb, poured his Moselle wine on the floor, drank his scotch and bourbon, broke his crockery, made love in his bedrooms, and left on foot at four in the morning. Elaine de Kooning, in fact, walked with one leg in a cast all the way back to New York, leaving Henzler's dining room, and his whole house, like a disaster area. I never saw him again at the Cedar Bar, and I don't think he made any further attempt to convert Bill de Kooning to Heidegger's ideas.

Why had the painters behaved like this? Most of them were gentlemanly enough, taken as individuals. Now I don't want to insist that any of them was particularly well brought up, but on the other hand, I do not want to blame their behavior on bad manners alone. Their behavior is, I think, better explained by the kind of inspiration they felt, and which related to the advances they were making in non-figurative painting. And I think the feeling of having to be inspired in a context where the kind of inspiration one favors is irrelevant and not required, is likely to lead to destructiveness. What the painters did that night was to make a Jackson Pollock out of Henzler's dining table and living room, a purpose he never dreamed they might fulfill when he invited them to dinner.

SO THIS was America in the 50's, in the early 50's, or at least a microcosm of it: energy, destructiveness, money—on the scene or coming on the scene, and an inspired movement in non-figurative art. I've often wondered: would the painters have behaved as badly had they been as skilled in painting landscapes as the French Impressionists in the 19th century, in painting interiors, or nudes like Bonnard? I do have the distinct impression that they might have treated Henzler's place better if their inspiration had led them to paint objects like it or in it. But in non-figurative painting, especially painting like Jackson Pollock's, who, as Bill de Kooning said, opened the door for all the others, the world is converted into a ruin of lines and colors, beautifully painted, to be sure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Record in Latin America

Max Singer

EVENTS over the last two years have not been all bad for the United States in Latin America. Honduras held its second free election in a row, and the elected Liberal party took power even though the armed forces preferred its opponents. The horrid government of Guatemala was replaced by that of a twice-born Christian, Ríos Montt, who seems to want to do better. Significant figures associated with the Nicaraguan revolution have now openly split with the Sandinistas. An outstanding democrat has been elected the head of financially troubled Costa Rica. Democratic elections were held successfully in Colombia and the Dominican Republic. Miguel de la Madrid, the new President of Mexico, the most important country in the region, seems to be relatively pro-American. The election in El Salvador surprised almost everyone with its tremendous outpouring of votes in a clear rejection of the guerrillas that greatly increased the legitimacy of the government we have been supporting.

However, major opportunities have been missed in Latin America and important mistakes made since January 20, 1981, when the Reagan administration became responsible for foreign policy. To appreciate the increased dangers resulting from the administration's failures in Latin America it is necessary to examine some of the main arenas individually.

Nicaragua

IN 1979 a broad-based coalition of democratic groups in Nicaragua joined with the Sandinista party (FSLN), headed by a directorate composed of nine Marxist-Leninists, in an armed revolt against the latest member of the Somoza dynasty. The rebels had outside support not only from Cuba but from democratic Latin American countries like Venezuela and Costa Rica.

Nicaragua turned out to be a replay of Cuba twenty years later. In both cases Communists disguised themselves to get democratic support, and then turned against their democratic allies to make totalitarian "revolutions from above." Despite persistent assertions to the contrary, in neither case did the U.S. have the slightest chance of avoiding the enmity of the revolutionary leaders.

The United States had for many years accepted the Somoza dynasty, and provided some economic and military assistance to it. As the revolt grew, the Carter administration at first put pressure on Anastasio Somoza which led him to liberalize his regime slightly, then attempted to put together a Latin American peace force to take over from Somoza, and finally joined in the call by the Organization of American States (OAS) for Somoza to step down, which he did.

As soon as Somoza was gone a one-sided conflict began. The Sandinista Directorate, led by Tomás Borge and the Ortega brothers, gradually excluded from power all the other elements in the revolutionary coalition that had defeated Somoza: the Church, the unions, the newspaper *La Prensa*, most of the business community, political parties, the Latin American democracies, and so forth.

The Sandinistas, of course, received massive help from Cuba, East Germany, the PLO, and other members of the Communist system of alliances. In addition to thousands of Cuban doctors and teachers, who came to combine good works with political help to the FSLN and with Marxist-Leninist indoctrination, more than 2,000 others arrived to help organize and staff the Sandinista system of control: the security police, regular police, army, militia, block committees, etc.

In a country of only 2½ million people, several thousand foreign experts in the use of force and political control are an overwhelming presence. The U.S. has never put so many people into any foreign country, of any size, except during wars.

The Sandinistas went about the business of taking power from the top with a good deal of shrewdness and caution. They knew that because of the $3 billion a year the Soviet Union has committed to Cuba they could not get enough financial aid from the East. So they decided to seek it from the West by signaling their desire to work "realistically" with foreign businessmen, and by downplaying their ideological commitments. This strategy succeeded. Western businessmen, banks, and inter-

MAX SINGER, a founder and former president of the Hudson Institute, is currently a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation. His article, "Can El Salvador be Saved?" appeared in our December 1981 issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

national financial institutions provided many hundreds of millions of dollars to the Sandinista-controlled government in its first few years.

As for the Carter administration, it provided more aid to the Sandinistas in one year than the Somozas had received in the preceding twenty. It virtually ignored the flagrant violations by the Sandinistas of their written commitments to the OAS to hold prompt, free elections and to maintain democratic pluralism. Virtually no help or even recognition was given to the various independent political and social forces struggling to survive by any outside country or organization, except the American labor movement.

By the time Reagan took office the nature of the Sandinista regime had become set, and there was plenty of evidence to show what that nature was. The so-called "72-Hour Document" had already been available for over a year. This extraordinary document contained the presentation by the Sandinista Directorate to a special three-day assembly of the FSLN cadre on September 21-23, 1979. In it the Sandinistas spoke of their determination to exclude from power their democratic "tactical" allies and to hold power for themselves, to be part of the camp led by the Soviet Union against the "imperialists" led by the U.S., and to expand the Nicaraguan military. In short, the document made clear the Directorate's determination to create a militarized totalitarian Marxist-Leninist regime as quickly as possible.

By January 1981 the Sandinista seizure of power from its revolutionary partners was all but complete. Alfonso Robelo and Violetta Chamorro had resigned from the junta. All the programs described in the "72-Hour Document" were well under way. While independent groups survived, they were much weakened and almost completely shut off from influence. The instruments of power, now greatly developed, were firmly in Sandinista hands.

The face of a spreading Nicaraguan totalitarianism was described in March 1981 (in the Washington *Post*) by José Esteban Gonzalez, a much respected figure who had organized the Nicaraguan Permanent Commission for Human Rights in 1977 to protest Somoza's abuses, and who now heads the Nicaraguan Committee for Human Rights from exile:

> What has happened in Nicaragua is very grim. There have been massacres of political prisoners. I myself with other members of the Human Rights Commission examined mass graves on two different sites near the city of Grenada in October 1979 and March 1980. Other persons in whose truthfulness I have full confidence have witnessed similar evidence at other sites—and even those who are still in Nicaragua will so testify. These killings cannot be dismissed as rash acts of post-revolutionary anger. They have continued for over two years—some occurred within the past few months.
>
> The official number of political prisoners in Nicaragua now stands at 4,200—higher than the highest figure ever registered under Somoza. There have been hundreds of disappearances—although the government never responds to inquiries about such persons.

President Reagan, as was required by law, terminated the program of U.S. aid for Nicaragua which President Carter had already suspended because of the Nicaraguan support for the guerrillas in El Salvador. (Our direct aid was anyway small compared with that which we had the power to stop but which continued flowing from the West's international financial institutions.)

But the Reagan administration has done virtually nothing to expose the campaign by the Sandinista leadership against its democratic partners. Nor has the administration made it clear—against the common notion in the U.S. and Europe that the Sandinistas are forced, as Castro was, to take harsh measures because of irrational American hostility to their regime—that the Sandinistas reneged on their commitment to pluralism long before Reagan entered office (and long before we began giving covert support to military action against Nicaragua from Honduras). The administration does not, in fact, seem to have any interest in or concern about democratic practice in Nicaragua.

By attending only to the Sandinistas' actions outside the country and their Cuba-Soviet connections, the Reagan administration has made it *harder* for the truth to be known about what is happening *inside* Nicaragua. The result is that by the time the real nature of the Sandinista regime is generally recognized, it may be too late, on both the internal and the external fronts. The independent political forces in Nicaragua that earlier might have had the effect of reducing the Sandinistas' outward threat may be too nearly destroyed, and the building of the huge new Nicaraguan army may be completed.

By January 1981 much work had been done on the Sandinistas' program to develop a 50,000-man army with modern tanks and jet fighters. This army, which had been planned and publicly announced by the spring of 1980 (although it is often said that it came about as a response to Reagan policy), is completely out of scale with any Central American army that has ever existed, and will dominate the local military scene.

This new Nicaraguan army, it is said, presents no problem because it is no threat to the U.S.; because nations do not invade their neighbors any more; or because the certainty of a U.S. response to a blatant Nicaraguan invasion of Honduras or El Salvador acts as an infallible deterrent. But what a rich store of examples, from just the last fifty years, can be adduced to show how totalitarian aggression can combine the *threat* of military force with propaganda, diplomacy, and the manipulation of domestic groups and of just grievances to achieve victory without invasion, or with invasion

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only by "volunteers" or as the last stage of a process that prevents any feasible resistance at the end.

Ultimately, a Latin American leader who is confronted by an army which seems willing to march, and that he does not have the military force to defend against, cannot be expected to resist the demands that army is supporting if he does not see where the military force he would need to stop the threatening army will come from in time. If there is division in his country he will be less capable of resisting. If the initial demands are modest he will be less capable still. The word appeasement may no longer serve as a proud label, but the policy is quickly reinvented.

The task for the U.S. is to reassure Nicaragua's neighbors that it is not the better part of prudence to accept the "guidance" of the Sandinistas. But to convince these neighbors we need to display an understanding of the situation ourselves. When the Reagan State Department finally began to pay serious attention to Nicaragua it focused mostly on Nicaragua's role in supplying weapons and other assistance to the guerrillas in El Salvador. The idea then seemed to be to negotiate a deal with the Sandinistas by which they would refrain from helping to supply arms to the Salvadoran insurgency and we in return would not challenge their internal behavior; in a word, a local détente. Fortunately this approach was at least temporarily aborted, in part because it evoked strong protests from Venezuela and elsewhere. Yet it still holds some appeal for those in charge of the administration's Latin American policy—despite the warnings brought to us by Eden Pastora, Robelo, Cruz, the Chamorros, and other democratic Nicaraguan revolutionaries who have learned the hard way.

People around the world, friends and enemies, used to assume almost as a law of nature that, although the U.S. might make mistakes, we could not be defeated and would not let ouselves be humiliated or shown to be negligent or incapable of defending our interests or our word. Certainly we would not let Communism expand in our own neighborhood. But how many, even in our own country, where the very idea of American indomitability inspires shame in the hearts of editorialists and foreign-policy specialists, are confident of this today?

Of course we might give firm guarantees of protection against any Nicaraguan invasion. But like the British guarantees to Poland in 1939, that would be a desperate act. How, then, do we propose to prevent Central America from becoming, over the next few years, as Communist as Eastern Europe, and by a similar process?

El Salvador

WHEN the Reagan administration took office, a "final offensive" against the Revolutionary Governing Junta (JRG) had just fizzled.

The JRG was a year-old partnership between the new army of El Salvador—after the coup of October 1979, two-thirds of the senior officers had been thrown out and replaced by a reformist consensus—and the Christian Democratic party (PDC), the traditional major left-wing opposition party in El Salvador, led by José Napoleon Duarte. The previous spring this partnership, with help and urging from the U.S., had enacted a wide-ranging set of drastic economic and social reforms. Subsequently, however, five extreme Left groups had come together (with the help of Fidel Castro) to form a new guerrilla organization, the FMLN, and to build up an international coalition of political supporters and military suppliers. The FMLN created a political front (FDR) to represent it and succeeded in persuading a number of prominent non-Communists to take part.

The basic political fact in El Salvador is that the new leadership of the army, men in their late thirties and early forties, made a general commitment to the body of reforms described in their Revolutionary Proclamation of October 1979 and enacted by the JRG. They had decided that the old system of army domination of politics, in unexpressed partnership with a largely landed oligarchy, should be terminated, and that the army had to become completely professional. Despite all the pressures from Left and Right, internal and external; despite (or because of) the war; and despite normal rivalries, this new army leadership has remained stable.

What is more, the main themes of the October 1979 proclamation have been acted on: free elections, economic and social reforms, peace with Honduras, and the taking of steps to end political killings by security forces. For all this the army has received credit only from the mass of Salvadorans, who in March of this year overcame threats and obstacles to come to the polls in unprecedented numbers to demonstrate the potency of the appeal of free elections and to support the army against the guerrillas who urged them to stay home or to cast null ballots.

Most analyses of the political situation in El Salvador overlook the fact that few civilians there know how to conduct themselves in a democratic environment. With the partial exception of the army, most Salvadorans have little sense of the techniques of compromise, or of what a loyal opposition is, or of how personal or ideological rivals can unite within the system against an enemy deadly to all. The Salvadoran way is to politicize or personalize everything, even during a war. In the period before the March 1982 elections, the Christian Democratic party (PDC) remained so consumed by its historic antagonism to the army that even after two years of partnership it was unable to establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the people clearly favored the army, the PDC campaigned in part against it.

Another source of misunderstanding concerns the political significance of the brutality seen in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

responding to the guerrilla threat. Some of the atrocity stories are true, but many others are exaggerated or made up out of whole cloth, and very often the connection between the individuals who carry out an atrocity and the army is tenuous or nonexistent. Crimes committed by men who used to be in the army or in the security forces, or by village "self-defense forces," or by an individual officer acting on his own, are all charged to the army's account. In some cases this is fair, but often the charge of army responsibility is not justified.

The reduction of political killings by the security forces has been obscured by the great increase in killings by *all* parties in connection with the guerrilla war, which was raised to a much higher level after the FMLN was created in 1980. In this connection it is a mistake to believe that the record of atrocities and brutality shows that the army is unpopular in El Salvador, or that the peasants must identify with the victims. In El Salvador most people, whether Left or Right, civilian or military, are not particularly troubled by the lack of restraint of their own side. Depending on their own sympathies, most tend to blame either the guerrillas or the army for *all* the deaths.

Among army officers themselves there is a wide range of opinion on issues of economic and social policy—issues which most want to leave to civilians anyway—and also a wide range of attitudes on human rights; but there is little correlation between these two sets of views. Some "radical" officers are brutal and some "conservative" officers are humane, and vice versa. It would be a mistake to conclude from the record of atrocities in the guerrilla war that power in the army resides with the opponents of reform—or that replacing the present army-oriented government with some other group would be likely to change things for the better. Despite the exclusive stress in the U.S. on the need to control the Salvadoran army, it remains true that the quickest and most effective way to stop *all* the killings associated with the guerrilla war is for the guerrillas themselves to stop the war.

THE Reagan administration's failures in El Salvador have been both political and military, but there may be a greater chance to save the situation there than in Nicaragua. The military mistakes began in the spring of 1981, when the State Department decided that the initial assignment of 57 U.S. military trainers to El Salvador should be treated as a firm upper limit on U.S. military participation. For most of the time since then, there have been fewer than 57 American soldiers in El Salvador, a fact about which the administration has boasted. But if what we are doing in El Salvador is right and important, why should we limit ourselves to 57 men? The administration has not asked itself whether it is doing *enough* to prevent the Communist-aided guerrillas from defeating the elected reform government of El Salvador, or whether small increases in the equipment, training, and support we provide might not make a real difference.

In fact, more effective help from the U.S. during the past eighteen months (and at a much lower level than the foreign assistance that has been given to Nicaragua) could almost certainly have produced a more favorable military situation in El Salvador, possibly even a military victory. The same modest increase in U.S. military aid now might not be nearly so effective—in part because of the new Nicaraguan army. In many situations the prudent response is to delay; in El Salvador, however, the decision to refrain from vigorously pursuing victory when it was achievable was the opposite of prudent.

The administration also failed to give adequate *political* support to the revolutionary government. It was very slow to recognize that the new army leadership in El Salvador had committed itself to a civilian reform government based on free elections. Instead, in presenting its case to Congress and the public, the administration followed the strategy of crediting Duarte and the Christian Democratic party with everything good that happened in El Salvador, and deprecating, or distancing itself from, the army—even though the army was the originator of the Salvadoran revolution and was a full partner of the Christian Democrats.

This strategy had important costs. Since it was clear that the army was a weightier element in the political equation than Duarte, placing all our bets on Duarte's ability to control the army was seen to be delusory. On the other hand, the strategy encouraged Duarte and the PDC to claim credit for the reforms and to blame the army for atrocities. When opponents of Duarte won a majority in the elected Constituent Assembly, the U.S. was left hanging in the air.

Now the Reagan administration is inhibited from making the case for the Salvadoran army in Congress and abroad—a case which is intrinsically very strong—by its record of talking as if Duarte and the PDC were the only "white hats" in El Salvador. In this way it lost the political opportunity created by the dramatic election of March.

Mexico

REAGAN's term in office began after José López Portillo's term as president of Mexico was two-thirds over. López Portillo was understood to be a business-oriented economist and as sympathetic to the U.S. as could be expected of a Mexican president.

It was less well understood here that López Portillo had changed Mexico's traditional foreign policy of verbal support for Cuba and the extreme Left in the region to an active program of cooperation and coordination with Castro. Anyone who pointed to this shift in Mexican behavior was reminded that Mexican rhetoric always took a tone

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

antagonistic to the U.S., and anyway this was no more than the United States deserved as a rich superpower that had done Mexico dirt in the past and in some ways was still doing so. These lectures usually offered a sophisticated interpretation of the internal mechanisms of the governing Mexican party, the PRI, whose left wing was supposedly being bought off with foreign-policy rhetoric while the business interests who were the real power in the party decided the overridingly important economic issues. Besides, it was said, Mexico had had its bloody revolution in the past, and was thoroughly inoculated against a recurrence; it had a strong middle class with a stake in the system and too tough a character to let itself be taken over by the extreme Left. Mexicans knew Communists were not really a danger because if worse came to worst, the Americans would anyway step in to prevent them from coming to power.

While it was being elegantly demonstrated that Mexican foreign policy was not what it seemed to be, and with little notice being taken in the U.S. State Department or the White House, López Portillo had shifted from talk to a practical cooperative relationship with Cuba. The first Mexican action concerned Nicaragua, and was a decisive rejection of the Carter proposal that Anastasio Somoza be replaced by an inter-American peace force, which would have prevented the Sandinista revolution from taking place. Then, as soon as Somoza was replaced by the Sandinistas, Mexico insisted that no foreign country (i.e., the U.S.) had the right to influence developments in Nicaragua in any way. Mexico opposed any attempt to use the massive Western economic aid as a means of encouraging the Sandinistas to fulfill their promises of elections and a democratic political system. It explicitly endorsed the immense Cuban presence, which it said did not constitute foreign interference.

In El Salvador, Mexico's support for the extreme Left guerrillas (FMLN) was early, consistent, and extensive. The government-in-exile established by the FMLN openly operated out of Mexico. Mexico allowed a clandestine use of its territory for transshipment of military supplies. The PRI donated money to support the FMLN, and, with France, sponsored an initiative to recognize the FMLN/FDR as a legitimate "political entity." (This was so blatantly out of order that it stimulated many other Latin American countries, including Colombia, Venezuela, and Costa Rica, to come out in support of the Salvadoran government.)

Mexican support for the FMLN was critical in enabling France, the Socialist International, and many political figures in the United States to accept the perspective on El Salvador put forth by the FDR for the guerrillas. In the American and European discussion, Mexico was cited as an objective and informed source; at one point 100 Congressmen urged the State Department to pay greater heed to the Mexican initiative (this, while the OAS was voting by margins of 19-3 and 22-0 against the Mexican approach). Finally, in the summer of 1980 López Portillo reportedly promised Castro that when the planned final offensive in El Salvador was carried out the following January, the Mexican army would conduct maneuvers near the Guatemalan border to discourage the Guatemalan army from interfering. (The maneuvers were carried out as promised, but by then the situation had changed.)

Finally, Mexico was responsible for the establishment of COPPAL, an organization of Latin American political parties that excludes all Christian Democratic parties—supposedly because they are dominated from the outside—but does not exclude the Sandinistas. The purpose of COPPAL is to increase Mexican influence in Latin American politics; its effect is to split the democratic Left and Center and thus to increase the danger of polarization or takeover by Cuban-influenced extreme Left parties.

THE U.S. has several kinds of interests in Mexico. First there are the normal economic interests—oil, migrant labor and emigration, and other practical issues of trade. But aside from these the United States has a serious interest (in common with almost all Mexicans) in Mexico's stability, in the avoidance of a bloody internal war and of a takeover either by a brutal right-wing regime or by a totalitarian group like the Sandinista Directorate. In line with this, it is also in our interest that Mexico not extend help to Castro and other extreme Left forces in the area—indeed, that Mexico work *against* such forces, as Venezuela and Colombia sometimes do, either independently or in cooperation with us.

Our ability to influence Mexico during the recent period has undergone substantial changes. When Reagan took office Mexico's huge and growing oil capacity immensely strengthened the country's hand; everyone thought that oil would forever be a sellers' market. This perception was wrong at the time, but it took another year before it was widely recognized to be wrong, and even today few people realize that the buyers' market is likely to last a long time. Meanwhile the head of the Mexican oil company lost his job when he dared to reduce the price by $4 a barrel in order to sell the stuff. A few months later his successor, who restored the old price upon taking office, had to lower it again. Now many informed Mexicans would like to arrange for the U.S. to buy more of their oil without breaking the price, thus making it possible to earn an extra $5 or $10 billion a year which the country needs rather badly, especially since this summer's massive financial crisis.

When it comes to oil Mexico functions in effect as an informal member of OPEC, and has the same basic strategic problem as the other members. The problem is how to sell as large a percentage of potential production as possible without breaking the price. Each member would like to sell his own oil while the others hold back,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to keep the price up; this leads to a good deal of implicit political bargaining among the sellers. Mexico's special position in the group consists in the fact that it is probably operating the farthest *below* long-term capacity, and may be the only country that can sensibly expand sales by 5 million barrels a day or more over the next decade. In addition, Mexico is next door to the world's largest importer of oil.

If there were some way the U.S. might arrange things so that Mexico could sell a larger share of its potential oil, while the other suppliers held back, this would be very valuable to Mexico. At the same time there are a number of reasons why it would be good for *us* if Mexico took a larger share of oil revenues away from the Middle Eastern countries. Nevertheless, despite these potentially large common interests, it is not clear that a way can be found to serve them. The difficulty is increased by Mexico's perennial posture of suspicion toward the United States and its desire to minimize symbolic dependency on the country with which it conducts the bulk of its foreign trade.

The Reagan administration has done little to advance U.S. practical interests vis-à-vis Mexico. It has not gathered together America's various trade, energy, and immigration concerns and tried to bargain seriously with Mexico over them. In this respect it has represented no advance over the Carter administration.

On the issue of Mexico's help to Castro, the FSLN, and the FMLN, the Reagan administration has not even made a start. Nor has it tried to alert others to the role that Mexico has been playing. Hence we have been regularly pressured to bring U.S. policy into line with the supposedly neutral and benignly motivated Mexican initiatives in Central America, and at a loss to counter with firm initiatives of our own.

As for Mexico's internal political stability, the administration's main strategy has been to deny that there is a problem. The question was not even on the agenda until the surfacing of the financial crisis this past summer. No effort has been made to warn the Mexicans of the price they may end up paying for their failure to tax their wealthy, for their callous treatment of the Indians who have been thrown out of the new oil lands near the Guatemalan border, and for their disregard of groups without full representation within the PRI. Nor have the American and European publics been made aware of what it may mean if the extreme Left begins trying to destabilize the Mexican regime.

A NEW president, Miguel de la Madrid, is about to start a six-year term of office in Mexico. The financial mess he is inheriting has been worsened by the potentially disastrous process initiated by López Portillo's nationalization of the banks, undertaken to avert blame for mismanaging the economy. The banks own blocks of stock in many Mexican companies and have embarrassing information about many prominent Mexican business and political figures; the extreme Left has access to the government agencies now controlling the banks; this combination may turn out to be lethal to the Mexican economy.

In foreign policy, a Mexican president traditionally has great freedom to set his country's direction. López Portillo chose, in effect, to strike a partial alliance with Castro. This may have served his personal interest in buying protection against destabilization and in keeping Mexico quiet until December 1982. De la Madrid must decide whether to extend this tacit alliance or, if not, how best to move away from it. But even if de la Madrid understands the need to switch from a strategy of buying off and postponing to one of active political defense, he will face a difficult and dangerous situation. The extreme Left, part of which is strongly influenced by Castro and/or the KGB, now has a substantial position in Mexico's intelligentsia and media, in the PRI, in the civil and foreign service, in the Church, and perhaps elsewhere. De La Madrid is thus tied to the present course by a thousand tiny threads. He can break his bonds with a decisive exertion, but unless he makes such a decisive break he will have relatively little leeway.

The job of an American administration in this situation is obvious. The U.S. must give de la Madrid as many incentives, and as much sympathetic urging, as it can to encourage him to break away from the López Portillo strategy, and as much help as it can to reduce the dangers and costs of doing so. So far the Reagan administration has shown no sign of understanding the critical decision de la Madrid is facing, even though the possibility of influencing that decision may be the most important item in Latin American policy during its tenure.

Cuba

FIDEL CASTRO believes that the world is divided into "imperialist" and "revolutionary" camps. This means, in his view, that Cuba and the United States are mortal enemies. Nothing we do can change that view.

Of course, the fact that the Cubans see us as their enemies does not mean that they are without normal interests and normal weaknesses, or that it is impossible to negotiate and make practical deals with them. But if there is an opportunity, by using appropriate means, to increase the chances that a non-totalitarian regime will come to power in Cuba, our principles demand that we exert reasonable efforts in that direction.

Undoubtedly President Reagan and others in his administration understand these primitive facts, but there can be less assurance about the individuals representing the U.S. in Cuba and the relevant officials in the State Department. This

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may explain why the plans for Radio Marti, a Radio Free Europe-type broadcasting service aimed specifically at Cuba, were so late and so desultorily pursued; why there were periodic flirtations with unserious schemes for "better relations" with Cuba; why consideration was given to seeking Cuban (and Mexican) "cooperation" in negotiating with the Sandinistas; and why no substantial effort has been made to inform the American public or elites in Europe about the number of political prisoners in Cuba and other evidences of Cuba's totalitarian character and pernicious record. In short, the Reagan administration has underestimated the practical political consequences of the excessive credit widely given to Castro, and has not taken steps to make the truth more generally known.

Castro understands the U.S. and the role of the media very well. He has gloatingly described how, before Batista was defeated, he pretended to be a "Jeffersonian democrat" to win bourgeois support. And, at the same time that he was publicly deriding claims that Cuba was providing arms to the guerrillas in El Salvador, he was telling visiting German socialists that of course the claims were true. It may be possible to buy Castro off sometimes, but he does not sell anything cheap, and he will not sell out his essential convictions.

On the other hand, Castro presides over a regime that is profoundly unsuccessful and deeply unpopular (the evidence is that perhaps 10 percent or more would leave tomorrow, taking nothing with them, if they could). He is extremely dependent on the Soviet Union and was forced in 1968 to give it a key role in his secret police, the DGI. These factors create a field of opportunity. Unfortunately the Reagan administration has not begun to put together a realistic strategy for dealing with Cuba, neither militarily, nor diplomatically, nor in the war of ideas, and not even in the American domestic political debate. (On Latin American issues Castro's organization can get more letters sent to the U.S. Congress than Reagan's can, unless it uses Reagan's personal prestige as President.)

THE mistakes and failures of the Reagan administration are partly institutional but in greater part intellectual. The institutional aspect is of interest because the policy that has been put into place runs counter in many respects to the announced intention of the President and his advisers. The fact is that an administration which proclaimed a change of direction in Latin American policy chose for the most part to appoint as executors of that policy foreign-service officers who in various degrees accept the shallow idea-system which dominates the Latin American specialist community. Their mindset converges in significant ways, moreover, with the damaging policy pursued by the Carter administration, the ghost of which can be seen in the actions taken by the Reagan administration.

As for the intellectual failures, these show a recurrent pattern:

- The administration has not grasped that in countries like Cuba and Nicaragua it is dealing with Marxist-Leninist true believers and totalitarian techniques of securing and holding power.
- The administration does not appreciate the importance of ideas. It has no coherent strategy for presenting our case, even when that case is a strong one. In the making of policy decisions, weight is rarely given to the effect of such decisions on the war of ideas; programs designed to communicate ideas are not given sustained support. As a result, the President has even helped to make his opponents' case for them—as when, in a major speech on the Caribbean Basin, he stressed precisely the element of global confrontation with which he has been taxed by his critics, and, instead of pointing out that in El Salvador we were supporting democratic revolutionaries against a counterrevolution by the totalitarian Left, lumped the case of El Salvador together with those of Nicaragua and Guatemala.
- The administration completely fails to understand the concept of working with local democratic allies. Although it spends a great deal of time conferring with Colombia, Venezuela, and others, when the time comes to act it simply ignores these countries which share our perspective. Thus when Mexico tried to negotiate the Central American conflict with the U.S., the Reagan administration quickly responded, all but abandoning the countries it had previously been working with to develop a unified democratic opposition to the FMLN and the FSLN. So now Venezuela has been led to reduce its support for democratic forces in Central America and to work diplomatically with Mexico.

In sum, in dealing with Latin America the Reagan administration has failed to keep in mind the distinction between democracies and enemies of democracy; failed to understand the nature of modern totalitarian aggression, and especially its reliance on a war of ideas; and failed to demonstrate the rewards of friendship to those who share our values and basic perspectives. As a result, opportunities for significant democratic victories have been lost, and major setbacks may yet occur before Reagan's term is over.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My Friend Martin

Joseph Epstein

You can never know for certain what the next person thinks of you, but my guess is that Martin thought I was smart enough to get my work done and make a small name for myself in a large world, yet not as smart as he, who understood how hopelessly complicated the world was, an understanding which only rendered him impotent to make any sort of dent in it at all. Why some people are able to chug along without second thoughts and seem to get the best out of themselves, while others are stopped by interior obstacles, blocked by irony, or entangled in the skein of their own deep dubiety, this undoubtedly was a question that Martin spent long hours with. No longer, however. The other day, in the last paragraph of what was otherwise a business letter from a man who was also a friend of Martin's, I read: "Martin died a few weeks ago. It was as bad as it could have been at the end: he developed brain tumors and aphasia. I kept talking to him but was never sure how much was getting through. He never had a chance to make up his accounts with the world."

About sixteen months before, Martin had phoned. I assumed he was in from London on a business trip, hawking one or another of his publishing projects in New York. When he was in the United States, sometimes he called, sometimes not. Inconstancy, if not exactly a part of his charm, was very much part of his standard operating procedure. As long as you weren't Martin's wife or business partner or boss or lover, this inconstancy was tolerable. Not that you had any choice in the matter; nagging Martin somehow did not seem the correct approach. When he was ready to see me, I was ready to see him.

Our friendship, it occurs to me now that he is dead, was completely disinterested. What I mean by this is that we neither took nor expected anything from each other. We did no business together, asked no favors of each other, shared no common past and hence no nostalgia, confided rarely if at all. In fact, I can hardly recall what we talked about, though our hours together always passed very pleasantly, even delightfully. What is more, unlike in so many friendships, in ours no obligation was built up on either side. No, the only reason, the only motive I can make out for our friendship was that we liked each other without complication.

When Martin told me, sixteen months ago over the phone, that he had cancer and of a kind that could not be operated on, my first response was to ask him if he needed any money. A friend who was with him in the last year of his life reported to me that Martin was much touched by my offer. But in truth the offer came less as a gesture of generosity than as one of dumfoundedness—my usual response—in the face of impending death. He told me in that same phone conversation that he intended to stay in New York, where his older sister was a physician and where oncological treatment was said to be more advanced, leaving his wife and young child in London for the present. We would, he said, stay in touch. He was, I believe, forty-five years old.

That would have made him thirty-two or thirty-three when I first saw him. The setting was a large boardroom with dark wood and black leather appointments at the offices of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., in Chicago. He was part of a crew whose project it was to develop, out of the amplitude of the *Encyclopaedia*, a core of material that could be supplemented with local, national, or regional material to provide encyclopaedias to be sold in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America. Quite a crew it was, too. Its chief was a Greek of great suavity, a man who claimed to have been brought before and survived a Nazi firing squad; a dazzlingly beautiful young woman, another Mediterranean type; a tidy English lady who spoke, most tidily, in an Oxford accent; and Martin. Martin, who spoke in a basso voice, was less readily pinned down. He gave off an international aroma. He might have been an Israeli educated in Europe, except that he dressed too well for an Israeli. He could have been a Dutchman, or a dark Dane, or from Andorra or the more cosmospolitan circles of Buenos Aires. In fact, Martin was a Jew from New York.

Martin was a man who had made himself, or rather remade himself. I never knew, and had had only the faintest hints of, the original version, the boy and young man friends who knew him from the old days in his neighborhood or at Bard College called Marty. The secret of life, it has more than once been said, consists of being absolutely oneself. What, though, if it is a self one is not very comfortable with, or even much likes? I do not know about Martin's original self, but his remade self seemed to me highly interesting. He was, for example, a handsome man, though he really had no right to be. He was quite short—5'4" at most—and had early lost most of his auburnish hair. But he had strong bones, supremely intelligent eyes set deep behind high cheekbones. He combed his remain-

---

Joseph Epstein's *books include* **Familiar Territory: Observations on American Life** *and* **Ambition.** ***He is editor of the*** **American Scholar** ***and our regular fiction critic.***

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing hair forward. He grew a mustache, and this well before your local accountant or every NFL field-goal kicker wore one. Short he was but strong, not wiry but muscular. His weren't the muscles of the natural athlete; they were those of the man who works out alone, a bit grimly perhaps, the muscles that come not by courtesy of nature but as a result of discipline.

His clothes were elegant, and not quite like anyone else's. They looked as if they might have been French or Italian. His suits and jackets were mostly of browns, his ties were like Venetian tapestries, though dusky, muted. His shirts were gray, or blue, or taupe. When he came to work for Britannica in Chicago he brought along a brown leather coat, fur-lined and with a fur collar, that he had bought in some secondhand shop in New York. Looking like the kind of coat some German general might have had made to order in anticipation of spending the winter on the Russian front, it must have weighed at least fifteen pounds. "Now there," I said when I first saw him in it, "is a serious coat." I think he was a little pleased at my recognition that this was a special piece of goods. In later years, after he moved to London, and when a year or two would pass without our being in touch, when he would call or we would meet, I would always ask, "So, how's the coat?" "Holding up nicely," he would say. "It's kind of you to ask."

THE Martin I knew was a character in some mythical movie set in the Balkans, with actors like Peter Lorre, Oscar Homolka, and Akim Tamiroff in the cast. Another friend of mine, a Berliner, said he thought Martin a character out of E. T. A. Hoffman. Certainly he had some extraordinary, as we should say nowadays, moves. When he smoked a cigarette—lung-ripping Gaulois were his brand—you could scarcely take your eyes off him. Like a gourmand eating a pigeon stuffed with truffles, so Martin taking down smoke—he seemed to enjoy the hell out of it. He wasn't a heavy smoker, either, but a controlled one; it seemed he got so much out of every cigarette that he didn't need a lot of them. He handled money with an interesting sensuality, rubbing the bills when he removed them from his wallet between his thumb and index finger as if they were of cashmere or vicuna. His fingers, short, broad, powerful, were not elegant but what he could do with them was.

Martin's manner and general demeanor made him seem like nothing so much as a spy, but if I were a casting director I shouldn't have wanted him in my movie for his being, in the role of double-agent, perhaps a shade too obvious. But cast as an associate editor at Encyclopaedia Britannica in the late 1960's he was scarcely noticeable. Britannica was then undergoing an enormous reworking, under the direction of Mortimer J. Adler, who had conceived the absolutely novel and quite Wonderlandish notion of rewriting *Encyclopaedia Britannica* by creating its index first. A crew of oddballs and misfits—out-of-work theologians, disgruntled academics, St. John's of Annapolis graduates, free-lance writers, down-on-their luck scientists—myself among them, were hired to attend Dr. Adler's daily tea parties, where the subject was how best to organize, or rather reorganize, knowledge. It was unintentionally comic but the pay was excellent. Martin was our legal editor.

How does one get to be a legal editor? One way is to go to law school, fail the bar exam, even though one is exceedingly intelligent, then refuse to take it a second time. This at any rate was Martin's way, and friends of his, meeting soon after his death, seemed to feel that first flunking and then not retaking the New York bar exam was the great turning point in Martin's life. I am not so sure. I cannot imagine Martin ever marshaling the patience for the intricacies required in tax law or estate planning; nor can I envision him sitting, in a Queens County courthouse, conferring with and calming down a female client in a divorce case. Martin's mistake might not have been in failing to take the bar examination but in having gone to law school in the first place.

DOES life really have turning points, or is it instead for most of us one long, fairly straight road riddled with more or fewer bumps and potholes, nails and broken glass? I don't know for certain but my guess is that Martin probably was a straight-road man. Ten or so years after I met him he made a casual passing reference to "my shrink," and as a man in psychoanalysis Martin no doubt believed less in turning points than in straight roads of destiny; for what else is so much of psychoanalysis but a trip back down the road in the attempt to discover when and where the scrapes and misalignments and blowouts occurred? Yet I thought at the time Martin mentioned "my shrink" that the psychoanalyst who had Martin for a patient certainly had a couchful.

He was so very intelligent and so very devious and so very intent on bungling his life. Intelligence first. An example is wanted. In those days, late in the 1960's, a time when Britannica was filled with people in their twenties and early thirties who were at work on the great revision, political rallies of one kind or another were fairly frequent. One day in particular a rally was to be held on the plaza outside the building in which Britannica had its offices. People going to the rally—it was an anti-Vietnam war rally—were excused from work, and those who planned to go wore black arm bands. I heard a very earnest young Jewish girl, a secretary, who was wearing an arm band, say to Martin: "Aren't you going to the rally?" Martin replied: "No, Naomi, afternoons such as this I generally spend at the graveside of Santayana."

Now I submit that this reply, so characteristically Martin, was perfect. That the young woman would not have known who Santayana was, that, too, was artful, for the true artist doesn't require an immediate response. Sometimes I have thought that Martin was an artist, and that the sadness of his life was that he had no art to convey—except perhaps the creation that had become himself.

Consider for a moment his reference to Santayana. Had Martin read much Santayana? He must have read enough of him to know that citing a figure noted for his serenity at a time of tumult was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exactly right. But whether Martin had read and admired Santayana or any other writer I have no way of knowing, for we never discussed books or bookish things. Before law school, he had gone to Bard, one of those small schools—Antioch in Ohio and Reed in Oregon were perhaps the only two others—in which the liberal arts were taught as though they were a religion. Usually the people who have gone to these schools never quite get over them, but Martin did and he scarcely ever mentioned Bard, except once to tell me that the teacher he most admired there was Heinrich Blücher, the husband, as he has since become known to history, of Hannah Arendt. Once Martin told me that, finding himself in a great bog of depression while an undergraduate, he had come to Blücher to announce that he intended to take his life because he could not find any reason for wanting to live. "Don't take your life," Blücher told him, "we'll find you a reason."

I assume that Martin read widely while at Bard, but, I suspect, he had pretty much stopped reading by the time I met him. Not only did we never talk about books, but I never saw him carrying a book. In his London apartment there were a few books, though these could have belonged to his wife. He may have thought that he had gone as far as he could with bookish knowledge, and that if he were to discover any of the world's secrets he would have to extract them directly from life. Besides, although there was nothing jittery about him, although all his gestures seemed deliberate, he had not the temperament for repose; he was a social being, a city creature, a man of and in the world.

About the world he could be very penetrating. When he spoke with you, at least upon the first few meetings, you felt rather as if you were under investigation—and you were, for Martin was taking your intellectual measure, estimating your philosophical weight. Were you a serious person? An interesting person? What were your flaws? What was your con? What might your personal fantasies be? How did you view life? These, you sensed, were among the things he was trying to get at as he spoke with you.

Martin specialized in the oblique insight. He would say that a certain woman would never love a man above a certain size. He was very efficient—that is to say, unfailingly correct—at spotting closeted homosexuals. He could scent malice, insecurity, cowardice in another man. He was almost a pure observer. He seemed to have absolutely no nervousness about status. At Britannica, I was a senior editor, he an associate editor, but he never had any difficulty talking down to me when the mood was upon him.

Martin may or may not have been an original, but this much at least must be said of him—like Hazlitt, he never listened to the echo. He came by his views on his own. He was, for one thing, well spoken, his speech utterly free of both cant phrases and jargon—and hence his mind was free of trendiness and clichés. His politics, for another thing, were like no one else's I have ever met. Not that he ever laid them out for me in any detail, but my sense was that while disliking what he felt was tinny or vulgar about American life—he never, so far as I know, owned a television set—he felt no need to knock these things; and, what was more, he had a true respect for entrepreneurs and tradesmen, who he felt were the backbone of this or any other healthy nation. This is all the more interesting when you consider that, in the late 60's, to be an intellectual, or even to be interested in intellectual things, was to be, except for odd pockets, on the Left. Heinrich Blücher, an old German radical, may have been Martin's mentor, but Martin's mind was his own.

If Martin had read this last line, he might have replied, "Surely no one else would want it." I fear I may have made him seem a little humorless. But only to the humorless was he humorless. Part of his charm was in the playfulness of his mind. I went through a divorce during the time Martin was living in Chicago, and, though mine was an uncontested divorce, under the legal requirements of the day I needed two witnesses to attest to my fine character. I chose Martin for one. He came through splendidly, though I remember thinking, while he was on the witness stand, that I rather wished he looked less like an agent provocateur and hadn't a hotel for an address. After the courtroom business was over, we walked across the street—it was only a quarter to eleven in the morning—for drinks. I bought two rounds of Bloody Marys, and toward the end of the second round Martin slipped into a sweet little bit about being a professional witness, and having three more cases to go through that afternoon. "I'll be glad when the divorce season is over," Martin said, "and we can get back to witnessing criminal cases." A moment later, looking at me, he said: "Shit, boy, I could regale you with stories about Kahn here and I doing three-hour stints on the witness stand without time out even for so much as a leak." He would slide off into these vignettes at any time.

But if Martin had a playful mind, it could also play against itself—and wickedly. Although he was a New Yorker by birth, and a world city man by inclination, Martin did not despise Chicago. Not knowing many people in the city gave him freedom of a sort he valued. He lived in a hotel, which certified him as, in the phrase he once used to describe himself, "a permanent transient." He went to parties with various among Britannica's youngish editorial workers. He must have put in a certain amount of time in Rush Street bars. He had a lady friend. Yet he was performing badly at work, missing deadlines, showing up late in the day (usually near lunch), causing by his general behavior a good deal of ill-will against himself in the man for whom he worked. Meanwhile, he strolled the corridors and cubicles of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., clearly doing little work or having much in the way of business on his mind, a *flâneur* but one on the payroll. As he let deadline after deadline go past, it began to be rather apparent that he had a taste for trouble, perhaps even for self-destruction.

One Friday afternoon he strolled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into my office to announce that he planned to spend the weekend in New York and while there thought he might get married. Since he had never before mentioned any romantic connection in New York, this came as news to me. What, he wanted to know, did I think of this notion. I said I thought that, theoretically, marriage was a very sound idea, though, as a recently divorced man, I could not help noticing that, practically, in marriage one sometimes encountered certain little difficulties. But did I think he ought to marry? I don't know what you have in mind, I said, and I have never met the woman you plan to marry. Still, I was a pro-marriage man. "Where shall I send it?" he asked. "Send what?" I replied. "The check for this consultation, of course," he said, departing my office.

A few weeks later I met Martin's wife, whom he had brought back to Chicago and who was beautiful. She was Dutch, an Amsterdamer, with lovely skin and good humor and fine intelligent eyes. She was a jewelry designer who worked in gold. She spoke English with complete fluency, and only a slight accent. In some ways she seemed rather more American than her husband, to whom, it became evident on the instant of seeing them together, she was devoted. He was quite gallant around her and most solicitous. She, though, seemed to me perhaps more made for the world than he. Seeing them together it occurred to me that of course Martin would never have married anyone other than a European woman. They are a special breed, American men who marry (outside of wartime) European women, they entertain certain special ideas about themselves, like white American women who marry black men.

MARTIN and his wife and I and the woman I am now married to began to spend time together as a foursome. We got on well together, I thought, everyone liking everyone else. Usually we would drive out into the country on a Sunday. Once he took us to a very good restaurant he knew in Wisconsin, just over the Illinois border. More often we picnicked. Martin was a city man, but he seemed to me to ease up, to relax, in the country. Sometimes we dined at my apartment—Martin and his wife still lived, in fairly close quarters, in his hotel—and once I recall asking him if he had any difficulty finding a parking place. "Never," he said. "Always remember that there are two open parking places on every block in America: one where the fire hydrant is, the other at the bus stop."

I don't know for a fact that Martin did rack up scores of parking tickets, but it would not surprise me if he had. Every so often in the Chicago press—as I am sure in the press of other cities as well—a story will appear about a man being brought to court to pay $12,682 in accumulated parking tickets and fines. Martin might have been such a man, except that I suspect he knew he never would live long enough in Chicago to have been caught. When he spoke of himself as a permanent transient, he meant it; as with so many of his seemingly tossed-off phrases, this one too had precision. He and his wife continued to live in their furnished room off Rush Street. There was no talk of their settling in. The feeling of their time in Chicago had about it an atmosphere of camping out.

AND THEN Martin did something that put finis to the Chicago chapter of his life—a thing that is extraordinary and that requires explanation. What he did was get himself fired from his job at Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.; and fired not for producing work at too slow a rate, nor for disrupting others while on his *flâneur*-ish rounds, but for being caught going through the desk and files of Britannica's editor-in-chief. Coming in late in the mornings as he did, Martin frequently stayed an hour or so after everyone had already gone home. Evidently he must have thought everyone had already left for the night when he entered the editor-in-chief's office for a casual inspection of his most recent correspondence and memoranda. Unfortunately the editor-in-chief's secretary had not yet left for the evening but had been in the ladies' room. When she returned to her desk she discovered Martin going through her boss's desk. Next morning she reported this to the editor-in-chief, who asked no explanation but announced: "Call down to personnel. I want him out of here before the day is over." And so, most efficiently, Martin was.

What could he have had in mind in going through another man's private papers? Had he gone through other people's files, including my own? I should not have been shocked if he had. But what was his motive? Let me say right off that self-interest probably had very little to do with it. Scarcely anything in the editor-in-chief's papers could have made reference to Martin. As I suppose every large corporation is, Britannica was shot through and always hot with rumor and gossip. My guess is that, in digging into the editor-in-chief's papers, Martin was searching for a bit of inside information. He wanted to know what was really going on. He was interested to discover how this large company operated, its interweavings and its inner dealings at its higher levels. He was, in a word, curious, but in a detached sort of way—as a child might be curious, or an artist.

Was this behavior self-destructive? The more I stare at the phrase self-destructive the less certain I become of its meaning. I don't for a minute think that Martin wished to be caught in what was a fairly humiliating circumstance. At the same time he had to have known that there was a chance of his being caught. But then Martin often seemed to be playing a game of Russian roulette with himself. He was, for example, a mad driver, and I can think of a number of roller coasters from my youth that compared favorably for feelings of comfort and security with being driven in a car by Martin. After his death, I learned that he had been gambling steadily. He wasn't, I gather, a bust-out gambler but apparently, frequenting the gaming clubs in London, lost at a steady and serious enough clip. He had a taste for playing at the brink: taking the curve at seventy miles an hour, missing the fourth deadline, highrolling on a modest salary, grabbing his trousers only when he heard the husband's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand turn the doorknob, always when possible taking the wild chance. Is such behavior self-destructive? Or is it instead the behavior of a man who may have felt himself deadened in his soul and knew no other way than risk-taking to assure himself he was still alive?

MEANWHILE, Martin had effectively slammed the door on himself in Chicago. He was, it seems, building up an impressively disastrous little resumé. There were events that couldn't be accounted for easily to a prospective employer—"What happened again in law school?"—years that yawned vaguely—"You say you worked at Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., then, but you'd rather we didn't get in touch with anyone there?"—questions for which straight answers were simply not available. Martin hung around Chicago for a while, trying to pick up free-lance editorial work, but perhaps no one was less suited for such work. Finally, he had made a connection with the Dutch publishing firm of Elsevier, for whom he was to work, on a new encyclopaedia project, in London. To have gained the job he must have done some very artful interviewing.

I felt pleased for him. London, a great world city, an increasingly international city with the vast decline in English power, seemed right for Martin—for his clothes, for his mannerisms, for his cosmopolitan notion of himself. Perhaps his wife, though she had never complained in my presence, would be happier there, too. No mention was made of London's being a temporary arrangement; no talk about returning in three or five years. In an odd way, when Martin left to live abroad I felt as if he were, at last, returning home.

Would Martin be more at home abroad than, so to speak, at home at home? I pictured him aloft on planes for Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Rome, a Gaulois and a Campari on the tray before him, at ease, if not yet in Zion then at least on his way. Why mightn't Martin make a tidy success in publishing? So many doltish men I knew made large sloppy ones. There was a man at Britannica who, I once said to Martin's pleasure, seemed quite crass all right but not very commercial. He was able to retire in his fifties. Wasn't there room out on the margins somewhere for Martin to score a few victories? Clearly, intelligence was not wanting. Why not Martin?

WE fell out of touch. Martin, as might be imagined, was not much for correspondence. Sometimes, though, I would hear of him at second- or third-hand from someone who had been to and seen him in London. Shreds of information had come across. One was that he had left Elsevier. Another, much more significant in every way, was that Martin and his wife had had a child, a boy named Gabriel. This struck me as an extraordinary item. Martin as a father did not quite fit within the frame of the permanent transient within which I had always pictured him.

Not long after this my wife and I were in England for a visit. Before departing I had written to Martin to say that we would like to see him while we were in London. He wrote back to say come ahead and that we would be welcome with or without a salami. We took a long cab ride from our hotel on George Street to their apartment out near Hampstead Heath. The boy-child Gabriel was then perhaps eighteen months old. He was blond and ran about naked and was very beautiful. Martin's brother happened also to be there. Apart from his winning sense of humor and obvious high intelligence, he neither looked nor spoke as Martin did—further evidence, in my view, that Martin had made himself. The self-made man was, on this occasion as on nearly all others, very dependably late. His wife greeted us at the door, in fact, by saying that Martin had just called and would be a little late.

The apartment was hardly grand but it was pleasant. It was an apartment in which a small child reigned. The boy's toys were everywhere and so was he. All hope of order had been surrendered to this child. Yet no one seemed to be suffering very much. Everyone seemed to live, as it were, around him. I am not very sentimental about small children—or animals or good causes—but this child seemed to me rather special. He had much mother love but also, it became clear when Martin arrived home, father love. This man who seemed, from the angle at which he had allowed me to view him, so ill-suited to fatherhood was quite good at it. Martin was not a fawning father, but a father who seemed to know very much what he was about—to know what parts of this golden child were sheer animal spirits and had best be given way to, and what parts needed to be carefully molded and developed. For all his other difficulties, one sensed that Martin felt that, in this child at any rate, he had been blessed.

We ate in the garden behind their apartment. I had long since departed Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., but my wife still worked there, and she brought Martin up to date about those people there who interested him. After dinner, I told him some jokes I had recently heard, and he remarked that the English don't tell jokes. He wasn't very high on the English generally. He had few English friends, it turned out, but saw mostly Americans in London. He thought the English as a nation were doing all they could to make themselves negligible, and were succeeding handsomely. Martin had an apocalyptic streak, and when it would show up, as it did from time to time, I tended to tune him out. Now, with a grim look on his face, he told me he was searching for a place to live with his family when Europe fell apart.

London was clearly not going to be the answer for Martin. Seeing him unhappy there gave me a sharper sense of the malady of permanent transience. Martin had only to be in one place for his heart to yearn after another. His was the condition of the interior exile: take him to Paris, he cries out Rome; in Rome, he wants Athens; in Athens, Jerusalem is the name of his desire. He doesn't like it here. It looks better there. Anywhere you go, an old saying has it, there *you* are! The permanent transient doesn't quite believe it. Or, if in his heart he does, he isn't ready to act on it.

Yet Martin stayed on in London. He was locked into his business—manufacturing reference books of various kinds for larger firms—and seemed able neither to leave it nor

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to succeed in it. When we met on our next trip to London, he took us to a French restaurant in the neighborhood of his apartment, and between drinks and starters his wife told us that she had recently been operated on for cancer. Later Martin drove us back, at an insanely fast clip, to our hotel. At stop lights we heard Arabs standing on street corners chatting in their singsong native tongues. At the hotel Martin and I walked and talked for a bit. He told me what a lout his partner was. His situation was far from enviable. His wife was ill, his business seemed to be going nowhere, he lived in a vast city that seemed to belong to no one. When he drove off that night I thought I knew of no one lonelier.

THE last time we were together he was late again, of course. He was driving up from London to meet us in Cambridge, where we had been lent the house of a friend. His wife couldn't join him but he was bringing his son. When they arrived Martin looked a little seedy but then so did England. The boy Gabriel, though, was dazzling. He must at this time have been five years old. His head was very round and very blond; his face full of lively intelligence. He spoke in a lilting English accent, with occasional Cockney touches. Later, when I had pretended to steal a cigar from his father's pocket, he said, imploring me to do it again, "Joe, do it. Nick Martin's cigar." The boy called his father by his first name. Although I don't usually feel quite comfortable about this practice, in this instance it didn't feel wrong. Perhaps the reason was that, as the afternoon unrolled, it became apparent that Martin, along with being the boy's father, was something like his older brother.

We took a rowboat out on the Cam, behind the Cambridge colleges, the four of us, my wife and Gabriel, Martin and I. It quickly became apparent that Martin and his son shared a fantasy world. As we rowed among the inlets and streams down well past Peterhouse, they referred back and forth to a special world—of knights? of pirates? of gremlins and trolls?—which, clearly, only they inhabited. Martin was relaxed and at his best: filled with wit and penetrating observations and courtliness. The four of us lingered on into dusk, when Martin announced he had best get the boy back to London. He had promised his wife he would be back much earlier. Late again. As they drove off, the boy leaning out of the window, Martin waving, the battered red Mercedes clunking down the narrow Cambridge street, my wife turned to me. "What a pair they are!" she said. "What a pair!"

WHEN I didn't hear from Martin for four or five weeks after his call telling me that he had inoperable cancer, I telephoned his brother in New York to ask how things were going. Martin seemed in good mental shape, at least as good as could be expected, his brother said, though it was of course much too soon to know what effect the therapy was having. A few days later Martin called. He seemed, for the only time in our acquaintance, shaken. "I have got to find the faith to believe I can defeat this thing," he said. "I have to make that leap, and I don't know if I can." I muttered a few platitudes about having no choice but to make the fight. He said he might come to Chicago in a month or so. He would, I said, of course stay with us. It was the last time we spoke. For his own good reasons, he never came to Chicago and he never phoned.

Martin spent the last year of his life in New York. His older sister, a physician, lived there and aided in his therapy. His young brother, who had recently married and whom he loved, lived there as well. He spent long sessions with a boyhood friend, with whom he had gone to Bard and who himself had had a severe heart attack and thus a close glimpse of death, in Bardishly philosophical discussions on the meaning of life. Still, it could not have been comfortable for a man so intelligent as Martin, so alive to life's manifold ironies, to walk the streets of Manhattan with death so closely at his heels.

NOT long after learning that Martin had cancer, in an autobiographical volume of Peter Quennell's I ran across a reference to cancer as "the disease of the disappointed." I wonder what Martin would have thought of that notion. I suspect he might slyly have remarked that the reference was certainly apt insofar as having cancer was clearly disappointing. But in fact this was the kind of theoretical point Martin loved to play with. Was he, before he had been brought down by cancer, a disappointed man? Did he have a plan: to become rich, to be utterly free, to live according to the highest conception of himself? If he had, then no doubt he was a disappointed man, but in this he only joins the great majority.

Disappointed Martin may have been, yet—and here he was of a very select minority—he himself rarely disappointed. To be with him was almost always to be reminded of life's larger possibilities, which is the service performed by people who are original for the rest of us. And Martin, even though he was self-created, was finally an original. I think this is why I find myself so affected by his death. When a man or woman of originality dies the subtraction seems somehow even greater than the loss of a friend, which is subtraction enough. Martin died much too soon. As the friend who wrote to me about his death said, "He never had a chance to make up his accounts with the world." Yet, in the gift of his originality, Martin may have left behind a great deal more than even he could have known.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How to Read the Bible

Chaim Raphael

In encountering a new translation of the Bible, one often thinks first of the changes one can expect to find from the most beloved of earlier renderings, the King James Version of 1611. But there are broader issues which we are led on to explore in *any* version.

The new translation to be discussed here is that of the Jewish Publication Society of America, now complete with the publication of the third section, *The Writings* (*Kethubim*),* which is a miscellany of thirteen books starting with Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. On the question of changes, I might mention that shortly after receiving *The Writings* I happened to be sitting in a 14th-century English village church, reading, for the joy of the lingo, a discussion in the preface to the Book of Common Prayer (revised, 1662) of the pros and cons of altering an accepted text. How, the authors ask, does one "keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation"?

> For, as on the one side common experience sheweth that where a change hath been made of things advisedly established . . . sundry inconveniences have thereupon ensued, and those many times more and greater than the evils that were intended to be remedied, so on the other side . . . it is but reasonable that, upon weighty and important considerations, such changes and alterations should be made . . . as seem either necessary or expedient.

But if there are two sides to change, one danger is *always* to be avoided, that of falling into the hands "of such men as are given to change, and have always discovered a greater regard to their own private fancies and interests, than to that duty they owe to the publick."

One has to admit that there are occasional whiffs of this in the new JPS version of the Bible (hereafter JPSV), even if, as a whole, it is majestic, scholarly, and readable. In a review of the second section, *Prophets*, that I published in these pages a few years ago ("The Prophets in Modern Idiom," March 1979), I briefly compared a number of passages with the King James Version (KJV) and the earlier JPS version of 1917, to see what had happened to them, and to the elements of poetry and nostalgia with which they have become encrusted. If one examines *The Writings* in the same way, one can conclude sometimes that a change activated mainly by scholarly precision may have lost more than it has gained.

To take a few examples: in the 23rd Psalm, the KJV "He leadeth me beside the still waters" becomes in the new JPSV "He leads me to water in places of repose." "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" becomes "for many long years," which may be more correct for *l'orekh yamim*, but sounds far less confident.

On the other hand, there are innumerable verses in Psalms where a change establishes the sense more positively. In Psalm 26, the old meaning of "reins" or "kidneys" as the seat of emotion prompts the new translators to offer "test my heart and mind" instead of the puzzling "try my reins and my heart." In the same way we no longer read, in Psalm 29, that the voice of God "discovereth the forests" but "strips the forest bare." Two Psalms later, KJV's "set my feet in a larger room" becomes "grant me relief."

In spot checks like this—always interesting and sometimes to be enjoyed like a game—the issue alternates between literary echoes and the demands of content. Why should a new generation of Bible readers lose "I lift mine eyes unto the hills" (Psalm 121), in favor of "I turn my eyes to the mountains"? And how about the loss of "As the hart panteth after the water brooks / So panteth my soul after thee" (Psalm 42)? It is no more correct and certainly less pleasing to find this turned into "Like a hind crying for water / My soul cries for You." On the other hand, the directness of the new JPSV is often very effective, as in the opening of Psalm 45: "My heart is astir with gracious words," instead of the vagueness of KJV: "My heart is inditing a good matter."

But one soon tires of awarding marks in this way, for the central issue raised by a new Bible translation, the issue of the *content* of the Bible, is much bigger than the appositeness of individual words. Repeatedly, one is driven back from considering the correctness or euphony of any new translation toward two quite separate questions about reading the Bible: what did the words mean when first spoken; and what did they come to mean over the centuries? Not that these are the only or even the main questions that arise on reading the Bible, but they offer a way into the subject.

The opening verse of Psalm 45 which I have just quoted is a good illustration of the first question. The long title of the Psalm ends with the words *shir y'didoth*—"a love song," and its seventeen verses are indeed full of phrases which have the lyrical excitement of the Song of Songs. Since God and "the

---

Chaim Raphael *is the author of many books on Jewish history and culture, including* Memoirs of a Special Case, A Feast of History, *and, most recently,* The Springs of Jewish Life (*Basic Books*).

* *The Writings* (*Kethubim*): Third section of a new translation of the Holy Scriptures, Jewish Publication Society, 634 pp., $10.95. Earlier sections are *The Torah* (1962, revised 1967) and *The Prophets* (1978). As with the two earlier sections, translation of *The Writings* is mainly the work of a committee of scholars, in this case Professors Moshe Greenberg (Hebrew University), Jonas C. Greenfield (Hebrew University) and Nahum M. Sarna (Brandeis), associated with three rabbis "representing the three sections of organized Jewish religious life." Chaim Potok served as secretary of the committee.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

king" are mentioned several times, the KJV turns the Psalm into a kind of love song to God as king. The Catholic "Jerusalem Bible" (1966) likes this, and indeed takes it further. It says in a note that while some scholars now see the Psalm as quite secular—a wedding song addressed to a king—the religious intent is not to be ruled out:

> The Jewish and Christian tradition understand it as celebrating the marriage of the messianic King with Israel (prefiguring the Church), and the liturgy develops the allegory still further by applying it to our Lady and to the Virgin Saints.

Not all Catholics, one might mention, feel the need to read allegory into a happy love song. The Jesuit Father Mitchell Dahood, who edited Psalms in 1966 for the Anchor Bible, treated Psalm 45 quite flatly as a royal wedding song. And this is the line adopted by the new JPSV as well. The translators clearly feel that this is how it was first heard, and are happy to manipulate the references to God and "the king" to present their reading.

THIS, however, is still only translating the words themselves. We often understand the Bible better when light is thrown on something behind the words through suggestions from anthropology or comparative religion. There is a neat illustration of this in a comment on Psalm 45 by Theodor H. Gaster in his book, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (1969). This love song, he says, is not a theological allegory *or* a royal wedding song. It is a minstrel's song, sung at an ordinary wedding in which the bridegroom is described as a king and the bride as a princess, both of them radiating a "majesty" which is quite "divine." It was a common convention, we learn, in the ancient Near East and elsewhere for minstrels to be given their head in this way. To read this "psalm" properly, then, we should not think of our solemn and traditional Psalmist but of a bard improvising an extravagant toast, which begins (in Gaster's lively but accurate translation):

> My heart is a-flutter—
> oh joy!
> 'Tis for a king himself
> I am now to indite my
> works!

The words of the new JPSV are not far off this, but we get extra vitality out of them when we break out of the traditional solemnity with which we read the Bible to feel a populist echo of the time.

I HAVE often noted that scholars expounding individual verses in this way are somehow able to produce a convincingly lively tone that is absent in translations of whole books. Robert Alter achieves this effect frequently in his *The Art of Biblical Narrative.** A good example is his translation of a puzzling verse in Job (7:12) that reads in the KJV: "Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?" Alter explains that the epics discovered at Ugarit in Syria, from 1929 on, tell of battles between the land god Baal and the sea god Yamm (the word means "sea," of course), and that through this "a whole spate of dimly apprehended allusions in Psalms and Job come into focus," notably "the recurrent imagery of God's breaking the fury of the elemental sea or shackling a primordial sea monster." In this verse, therefore, Job is not asking rhetorically whether he is the sea (*yam*),

> but with a pointed sardonic allusion to the Canaanite myth, he is saying: "Am I Yamm, am I the Sea Beast, that you should set a guard over me?"

The new JPSV, it must be said, loses the sharpness of this verse completely with: "Am I the sea or the Dragon?" On the other hand, it does well to stick to the traditional rendering of Job 5:7 as "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward," instead of following the Anchor Bible's mythological reference: "Man is born to trouble, and Reshef's sons wing high," which is meaningless without a commentary.

In dealing with the assortment of books in *The Writings*, one makes no apology for concentrating heavily on Psalms and Job, for with most of the other eleven books—Esther, Ruth, Lamentations, Proverbs, etc.—the original or later meaning is relatively clear. This is not to say that there is no room in these books for evaluating the new JPSV in verbal terms. There are in fact many things to admire, as in the euphonious ending to Chapter 2 of the Song of Songs, where some neat changes now yield:

> When the day blows
> gently and the shadows
> flee,
> Set out, my beloved,
> swift as a gazelle
> or a young stag,
> For the hills of
> spices.

But, as always, one has some reservations. Do we gain anything in Ecclesiastes by replacing the famed opening, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," with "Utter futility! All is futility!" And surely it must be thumbs down for the new translation of Ecclesiastes 1:10: "Sometimes there is a phenomenon of which they say: Look, this one is new!" For all its many successes, the new JPSV can at times be too literal. In Ecclesiastes 7:8 we are offered "Better a patient spirit than a haughty spirit." The Jerusalem Bible is neater with "Better patience than pride."

IF ONE moves on from considering individual verses of this miscellany to its place in the Bible, the real problem of *The Writings* is that, despite the marvels it contains, the collection feels sometimes like the tag-end of a fantastic otherworldly experience documented in the preceding two sections of *Torah* and *Prophets*, and to that extent of secondary importance when it comes to the ultimate issue of how to "read," to experience, the Bible.

At first glance, it will no doubt seem absurd to describe as in any sense "secondary" the religious lyricism of Psalms, the uniquely powerful language of Job, or the wild visions of Daniel. What is meant in this kind of judgment is that the literary variety of *The Writings* still leaves something out; and this reminds us in turn that the Bible is

* Basic Books (1981). Substantial portions of this book appeared earlier in COMMENTARY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not to be analyzed or read *solely* as literature. It only achieves this status—to our delight—because three or more thousand years ago a people began to emerge with stories and writings similar in verbal construction to what was being said in the world around them but totally different in character, and instilling convictions about life that were to be a lever of history forever. How this happened is a mystery to which I, for one, have no explanation; and in a sense how it began is of infinitely less moment than the living out of this experience in the manifold forms through which it has been received and understood over the millennia.

Robert Alter makes this point effectively when he says in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* that the rubric of "literature" applied to the Bible is condescending. For him, the Bible offers "a complete interfusion of literary art with theological, moral, or historiosophical vision." But there is a paradox in his approach; for though he gives us a brilliant analysis of how the biblical writers achieved their literary effects, he is vague on the anterior question, which is why this literary style projected a content which was to be unique and immortal. At one point he says that it is the subtleties of characterization, as in the patriarchal stories, which "suggest the endlessly complicated ramifications and contradictions of a principle of divine election intervening in the accepted orders of society and nature." But this seems to have the elements of a non sequitur, introduced to cope with the baffling fact we are all aware of: that the Bible tales, paralleled in many other primitive literatures, had some peculiar quality that makes sense if you accept revelation but is inexplicable otherwise. On the same page we are told—as a conscious paradox?—that it is the "rigorous economy" of the biblical tale which leads us to ponder the complexities of human life "because these are essential aspects of its vision of man, created by God, enjoying or suffering all the consequence of human freedom."

Such an emphasis on the centrality of human freedom might arise very properly in a discussion of a highly sophisticated work like Job; but it is really not the *idée maîtresse* in the basic Torah, where God's will is projected as a law of the universe, with the people of Israel expressing it through *obedience*. Abraham is not making a free choice when he agrees to "bind" Isaac: he is obeying God. Obedience, it is true, is often expressed in the form of a covenant—a *quid pro quo*; and within God's direct commands in the Law there is often an "explanation," related to a moral system, of why He wants Israel to behave in a given way (e.g., in being kind to strangers). But the theme of the Bible, which every Jew has been aware of since it was first put together, is the overwhelming power and mystery of the relationship between God and Israel; without this the narrative skills and poetry and moral grandeur would never have emerged or persisted.

Because this theme is so startling, it has been a base for marvelous commentary—rational, legal, poetic, and mystical—in every generation. But all this will pass over one's head unless one first reads Genesis, or Deuteronomy, with total simplicity. We bring much more history and knowledge of history to our reading now than did those who listened to Isaiah, or Jesus, or Rabbi Akiba expounding the text; but in the acceptance of the stories we must be the same. The rationale of the Bible's power is apt to mislead unless something like faith is taken for granted.

FAITH is not the same as fundamentalism. It is more like what Coleridge called "a willing suspension of disbelief." And there is an apt demonstration of the importance of this kind of receptivity to the Bible in a new book called *The Story of the Stories* by the eminent novelist Dan Jacobson.*

Jacobson offers a thesis in his book which might be described, to use his own phrase, as how to read the Bible *without* faith. Giving up everything "natural" in the story as it is normally read, he propounds the idea that the Hebrews produced the Bible to express "a deep-seated historical and moral tension or anxiety within the Israelite folk memory" based on the fact that they had ruthlessly dispossessed the Canaanites of their land and possessions. In turn they would themselves lose, reacquire, and lose their land and possessions in a recurrent cycle, reflecting the swings in God's favor. There was a sense, Jacobson writes, in which it was comforting for the Hebrews to ascribe their helplessness to God's turning to other peoples as His instruments of power, but basically they were embarked on a retreat from reality, expressing through the Bible their sense of guilt and self-rejection. Equally unreal were the stories Jews told at later phases of the cycle of winning and losing:

> What has to be taken into account, therefore, is that the biblical story was able to act as it has on men's lives for centuries and millennia precisely because its *untruth* appealed to their imaginations at a depth the facts could never reach.

Jacobson has moved swiftly, here, from a psychological analysis of the *origins* of the Bible to a projection of unending guilt as the message that Jews have drawn from the Bible throughout history. So unreal is this as a way to read the Bible that one feels the structure of the argument to be upside-down. Far from beginning with the Canaanites, Jacobson seems to have in the forefront of his mind the guilt that today's Jews *should* feel, and perhaps he himself *does* feel, for "dispossessing" the Palestinians. Now that large forces in the world are once again, after a brief post-Holocaust interlude, engaged in what Ruth R. Wisse has called the delegitimation of Israel, one also notices an increase among Jews themselves of the doubt and self-rejection that Jacobson feels was a comforting—if dangerous—myth of the early Hebrews. John Carey, a distinguished English critic, seems to have sensed something of this kind when, in a review of *The Story of the Stories*, he noted sardonically that Jacobson's book gives the "impression that the whole thing was cooked up rather rapidly by a harassed Israelite propaganda team on the run from Yahweh's latest mark of favor."

* Harper & Row (1982). Reviewed in COMMENTARY, September 1982.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The odd thing about the power of the Bible, however, is that even when Jacobson is devising this psychological strait jacket, he finds himself commenting over and over again on the freshness and fruitfulness that the Bible projects when it is read "straight." He records his earlier discovery, when writing his novel *The Rape of Tamar*, that every phrase, virtually every word, in the relevant chapter of 2 Samuel was like a seed:

> Dry, hard, small, compressed, apparently lifeless, it was capable of astonishing growth, if it was planted in one's mind and saturated with whatever capacity one had for imaginative response and understanding.

Even on the subject of Hebrew guilt Jacobson sees an enlivening side. The Jews, always in a cycle of losing and winning, forged "an irrefragable identity or community of human feeling" between themselves and their enemies. He recognizes too that in the relationship of Yahweh to Israel, the "laws" which governed the domains of historical reciprocity and reversibility were far from mechanical or impersonal:

> They are moral . . . a precipitate of profound conflicts of desire and anxiety on the part of the writers. They are born out of a conviction—often a reluctant or angered conviction—of an ineluctable similarity of sentiment between all men, of their common vulnerability to misfortune, and of the likelihood that they will feel their misfortunes in an identical way.

ONE of the ways in which the Bible's universality emerges for Jacobson is in the freedom of the prophets to move about the streets speaking to the populace, entering the palaces of kings to denounce them to their face, and leaving behind the imperishable record of what they said. Accepting this, one ceases to look at a new translation of the Bible for accuracy or style, and thinks more generally, as Jacobson does, of "the incalculable influence that these writings have had, still have, and will continue to have, on the course of world history." This, then, is the context in which he accepts, even applauds, "the profoundly energizing uneasiness" that the story often reveals:

> In its way, that seems to me quite as original, and as provocative, morally speaking, as what the story tells us of the qualities that enable God to exercise choice: His invisibility, His transcendence, and His solitude.

Movies

Why Herzog Differs

Richard Grenier

ONE of the oddities of the age is the artist or intellectual who, deferring to the pervasive sanctities of the times, succeeds in misunderstanding his own temperament. There are quite a few of these about in America, but a most spectacular example is the German film-maker Werner Herzog. For, yes, Germany still holds the hearts of cultivated U.S. film lovers in thrall. It certainly holds in thrall the hearts of the director and program committee of the New York Film Festival, who during the recent festival featured two new posthumous Rainer Werner Fassbinders and reserved the most prestigious spot, the gala closing night, for Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*.

Four years in the making, the new Herzog film had even more flamboyant production problems than *Apocalypse Now* by Francis Coppola—a director with whom Herzog, as we shall see, has something in common. So the tom-toms have been beating for *Fitzcarraldo* for some time. François Truffaut has called Herzog "the greatest film-maker alive today," and *Fitzcarraldo* won Herzog the prize for best director at the Cannes Film Festival last spring. Now leading American critics have joined the chorus: "grand," "noble," "stunning," "monumental," "fascinating," "beautiful," "visionary," a work possessing "majesty," "exaltation," "passion"—a "miracle." Clearly the makers of *Fitzcarraldo* have succeeded in creating what people in the entertainment business these days call an "event."

There are not many celebrants of our modern, Western, pluralistic society among the leaders of the New German Cinema, and Herzog is not really one either. But as compared to, say, Fassbinder or Volker Schlöndorff, he is something of an original. If Herzog rejects our modern world—and I rather think he does—it is not in the name of

---

RICHARD GRENIER *is* COMMENTARY*'s regular movie critic. His new novel,* The Marrakesh One-Two, *will be published by Houghton-Mifflin this coming winter.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Marxism, Fabianism, collectivism, equalitarianism, economic justice, participatory democracy, or anything of that sort, but of something quite old—very old, indeed. A giveaway detail is that Herzog has had what seems a lifelong obsession with the conquistadors, that strange breed of Spaniard that once upon a time seized most of the New World with a ferocity, voracity, and resolve that are now hard even to comprehend.

Brutal, cruel, treacherous, but also possessed of insane daring and almost limitless endurance, these Spaniards, barely emerged from the Middle Ages, set out on a mission of such grandiosity that even their latter-day English rival, Sir Walter Raleigh, stood in awe of them. Raleigh wrote that they committed all crimes and endured all, "tempest, shipwreck, famine, mutiny, heat, cold, pestilence, all manner of diseases, extreme poverty . . . in search of a golden kingdom." For the historical novelty of these manic Spaniards was that they were no longer part of a cohesive medieval world, but were essentially freebooters: every man for himself. Moreover, they often came to bad ends. Balboa, having discovered the Pacific, was beheaded for treason. Pizarro, conqueror of the Incas, was hacked to death one Sunday after mass by his own followers.

OF ALL these "conquerors," the one whose exploits were the most extraordinary and ruthless (at least in the opinion of Humboldt, the great German naturalist and traveler) was Lope de Aguirre (c. 1510-61). While still a young man, Aguirre walked half the length of Spanish America to avenge an insult, found his man and killed him —the most unusual part of the episode being that Aguirre should have made the voyage barefoot, as if on some kind of religious pilgrimage, as if he wanted to stand avenged not only in the eyes of men, but of God. When his mind later turned to rebellion, it should perhaps not surprise us that Aguirre, whose early education had of course been deeply Christian, took on some of the attributes of Lucifer.

Aguirre, also in his early days, had fought valiantly for the Spanish king in many battles in Peru, in one of which he was severely wounded in the leg, leaving him lame—a trait he had in common with his great contemporary and fellow soldier, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. (Another Spanish soldier, Cervantes, fought the Turks at Lepanto, where he was crippled in the left arm.) But it was when he embarked in 1560 on the greatest Amazon expedition of the 16th or 17th century that Aguirre left his name in history.

Some 370 Spanish soldiers and 2,000 Andean Indians gathered on the west coast of Peru and struck out—as had so may Spaniards before them—in pursuit of *El Dorado*. This was twice the number of Spaniards who had overthrown the Inca empire, and the new expedition hoped to find another such empire, even richer in gold, farther east. It crossed the Andes, built ships, and set sail on the headwaters of the Amazon. Don Pedro de Ursúa, the expedition's commander in its first stage, had brought along his beautiful mestizo mistress, Dona Inéz, and there were other women in the company, including Aguirre's young daughter.

Aguirre began the expedition in a subordinate position, but he was to display a genius for exploiting and playing upon men's passions quite worthy of Shakespeare's Iago, a character many of whose traits he shared. Other men lusted for women, but not Aguirre. He liked to see other men drink, but did not drink. Almost all Spaniards were ravenous for gold, but even here Aguirre did not join in. Comfort, ease, food, luxury meant nothing to him. From the time he joined the expedition he schemed and maneuvered, first to obtain command himself, and then to turn the force back and conquer Peru. For Aguirre's ambition was not modest. He would rule this entire New World, this America.

IN PURSUIT of this goal and with the tools of the late Middle Ages, Aguirre crossed and half-recrossed a savage continent—incomparably more threatening than the one braved by Lewis and Clark. His ruthlessness has rarely been surpassed. One of the historical sources for Aguirre's dark adventure is the strange letter that he himself sent to the king of Spain, declaring himself in rebellion. Aguirre wrote that Ursúa, the first leader of the expedition

> was so perverse, vicious, and worthless that we could not bear him. Since it was impossible to suffer his evil deeds, and since you will easily understand, great King and Lord, I will not say more than that we killed him, a death, certainly, very quick. Then we chose a young man of Seville called Don Fernando de Guzmán as our king [commander] . . . I was named his *maestro del campo* [military chief]. Because I would not accept his insults and evil deeds he wished to kill me, but I killed the new king, the captain of his guard, his lieutenant-general, four captains and his majordomo, his chaplain, a woman who participated in the conspiracy against me [Dona Inéz], a knight of the Order of Rhodes, an admiral, two ensigns, and six of their allies, all with the intention of carrying forward this war unto death on account of the cruelties of your ministers to us. I named new captains and a sergeant major. These men [in turn] wanted to kill me, but I killed them first. . . .

Aguirre, although of noble birth himself, gradually killed every other nobleman on the expedition, which, with all the terror and bloodletting, was now making its way down the mighty Amazon, through tribes of headhunters and cannibals, who attacked it with poisoned arrows. Aguirre wrote to the King:

> The river is great and terrible. . . . Only God knows how we escaped from those terrible waters. I warn you, O great King, do not send Spanish fleets upon that accursed river, for I swear on the faith of a Christian, King and Lord, that if you were to send one hundred thousand men, not one would escape. All the rumors are false and there is nothing on this river except despair, particularly for Spaniards.

When his ships reached the Atlantic, Aguirre sailed north and took the island of Margarita, off the coast of Venezuela. From there he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

invaded the mainland with the aim, quite simply, of marching overland across the continent—again through jungle and swamp, over mountain and plateau, fighting cannibals and headhunters—all the way back to Peru. When their horses died of exhaustion, his men divided up the baggage and supplies, and Aguirre, although now over fifty, carried his full share.

Caught by an army still loyal to the king while still in Venezuela, Aguirre was at the end deserted by his men, who had been offered amnesty (not respected). Only one of his captains remained. Asked by Aguirre why he, too, did not flee, the captain said, "I have been your friend in life. I will be your friend in death." Aguirre's last thought was for his daughter. "Commend your soul to God," he said, and killed her so that she might not become "a concubine to villains."

At the end he stood fast as two of his own men shot him with arquebuses. The first shot only wounded him slightly, at which Aguirre said, "Badly done." The second one caught him full in the chest, but before pitching forward he said, "This will do." His head was cut off and his body dismembered in the fashion of the time, the head to be exposed rotting in an iron cage for the edification of the public.

Some 250 years later, according to Humboldt, the Indians of Venezuela still remembered Aguirre's wild and monstrous rebellion, and believed that his spirit wandered over the land in the form of a fiery vapor, which they called in his day the "Soul of the Tyrant."

SUCH was the figure on whose life Werner Herzog's first successful film, *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1973), was based. Although the director's technique, to be truthful, is not quite up to his material, Herzog succeeds in capturing a great deal of the spirit of this fabled rebel. He is greatly aided by Klaus Kinski (as Aguirre), whose ability to project a kind of malevolent intensity might be unmatched by any actor anywhere.

Herzog's movie follows Aguirre's expedition over the Andes, through the various plots and counter-plots and massacres, and halfway down the Amazon—where it ends with Aguirre, having killed everyone else, left floating downstream on a raft with monkeys. (As we have seen, the real Aguirre's end was far more bloody and horrible.) Herzog quite possibly intended the film, among other things, as a symbolic homily against the wickedness of greed, something like John Huston's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (based, incidentally, on a novel by B. Traven, another German). But whether or not greed was the real Aguirre's dominant sin, no one is attracted to his story by his evil alone. Men have been astounded in contemplating Aguirre by the colossal scale of his enterprise, by his fortitude, marching over the Andes and through jungles, building ships to sail the Amazon—by the audacity of his rebellion. Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate, fascinated, like other romantics, by Aguirre, wrote a book about him in 1821 in which he offered as one explanation of the Spaniard's attraction that "no dramatic fable was ever brought to a more distinct and tragic catastrophe."

And it was a catastrophe to which no great achievement was attached. Pizarro, Balboa, and Magellan were butchered, but every schoolchild knows what they accomplished. Like a long line of Jacobean villains, Aguirre did evil on a grandiose scale and then disappeared, leaving nothing.

WERNER HERZOG has devoted himself in film after film to men engaged in somber struggles, desperate undertakings against great odds, but where the struggles—sometimes highly symbolic—are in no obvious way directed toward the public welfare. In reviewing an early Herzog film, *Fata Morgana*, at the New York Film Festval in 1971, Vincent Canby of the New York *Times* seemed to complain that the film did not respect the proper "priorities for problems that must be tended to," giving as the salient part of his own list "war, poverty, [and] racial discrimination."

And, indeed, for an artist not to have the physical well-being of mankind at the top of his priority list nowadays is a rather distinctive trait. Our society, after all, has as its central goal the provision of ease, comfort, and security. It would wish to provide this with no pain, for as long a time, and to as many people, as possible, ideally over all the earth. This goal seems humane, sensible, and magnanimous (and I am certain I am imbued with its principles myself), but its fundamental doctrine, of course, is hedonism. And I imagine that many members of the leadership class of our society might be somewhat shocked to hear that most of the great figures of the past, the philosophers as well as the commanders, considered a life of this sort contemptible. And I am not referring only to Nietzsche and Napoleon.

Socrates, as he appears in both Plato and Xenophon, lived in poverty and despised worldly goods. His indifference to heat, cold, thirst, and hunger was legendary. Xenophon, one of his students, later to become a great general and command the heroic Greek Ten Thousand in the Persian Expedition, records in the *Symposium* Socrates' prodigies of hardihood as a soldier, his ability to go without food, to march with bare feet over ice. For Socrates was no pacifist. His indifference to death, in his words to his judges, reported by Plato in the *Apology*, are with us yet: "The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better, only God knows."

Epicurus, despite the meaning that has been vulgarly attached to the word "Epicurean," ate nothing but bread and water and maintained that a man could be happy on the rack. Stoicism had a particular appeal for rulers, and according to Gilbert Murray nearly all the successors of Alexander, and all the principal kings for generations to come, professed themselves Stoics. It is considered almost certain now that Socrates was put to death because of his connection with Athens's aristocratic party, to which most of his pupils belonged. The association of some form of Stoicism with rulers and ruling classes continued in an uneven line

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for thousands of years from Alexander the Great to Marcus Aurelius to Dr. Thomas Arnold and the English public-school system.

For if even a casual glance at history reveals that societies devoted to hedonism are submerged rather swiftly by those that are not, it is equally obvious that the infection of a governing class by hedonism is fatal. Our own hedonism, of course, is combined with altruism, and space is found within it for bouts of "exploring the universe" and "unlocking the mysteries of nature." But the overwhelming emphasis of modern, liberal, "progressive" society has been on the increase and generalization of pleasure—and in recent decades on the equalizing extension of pleasure to those unfortunates who do not have much of it yet. Whether or not this is all ultimately debilitating, someone, eventually, will presumably find out.

EARLY in World War II, George Orwell, no doubt responding to the mood of the time, reflected that all either capitalism *or* socialism said to people was, "I offer you a good time," whereas Hitler had said to his followers, "I offer you struggle, danger, and death." Orwell might have added "greatness," but he observed grimly that those who had been promised struggle and danger were proving awesome adversaries. If he had lived long enough Orwell might well have changed his mind on this, but, writing in 1940, he declared emphatically that the creed driving these adversaries forward was "psychologically far sounder than any hedonistic conception of life."

The country which was causing Orwell all this soul-searching, of course, was Germany, which, of all the nations of Europe, had for at least a century most stressed the cult of strength, calling, in Bismarck's phrase, for "men of blood and iron." The intellectual background of this attitude is rich and unusually dense, and out of it comes Werner Herzog, whose direct spiritual ancestor was a very significant German popular writer, almost unknown in America, by the name of Karl May. A kind of superior Zane Grey, with heavy infusions of Jack London and Rudyard Kipling, May had as his implausible specialty tales of the American West, cowboys and Indians—all hugely popular in Germany during the early years of the 20th century and infused with such German feeling that wits said they were being secretly written by Kaiser Wilhelm II. Orwell, in the same period referred to above, said that a ruling class had to have "a quasi-religious belief in itself, a mystique"; its members "can only maintain their position while they honestly believe that civilization depends on themselves alone." They must believe in their destiny. Karl May's heroes, riding the plains of the American West like members of a true *Herrenvolk*, certainly have this mystique. What Werner Herzog has done is simply transfer May's fascination with these Aryan Riders of the Purple Sage to the Aryan Conquerors of the Andes and Amazon. When 170 Spaniards conquered the huge Inca empire it would be difficult, given their behavior, to portray them as the lofty bearers of "civilization," but of their belief in themselves there can be no doubt.

Both before and after *Aguirre*, Herzog (director, writer, and producer of all his own movies) made a series of films which did not win wide public acclaim: *Even Dwarfs Started Small, Fata Morgana, Land of Silence and Darkness, Every Man for Himself and God Against All* (*The Mystery of Kaspar Hauser*), *Heart of Glass, Stroszek, Nosferatu* (with Kinski as Nosferatu), and *Wozzeck* (with Kinski as Wozzeck). Almost without exception, these films are about madmen, freaks, or at the very least ghouls or extreme eccentrics, all people far beyond the pale of everyday life. As put very well by the same Vincent Canby, it is as if Herzog "saw in his characters' certainty of crazy purpose a kind of divine breakthrough, a way of shaking off the sense of mortality that haunts all of the rest of us and makes us small." And it is when this "certainty of crazy purpose" is combined with extreme grandiosity of aim that we have the full Herzog, as in *Fitzcarraldo*.

The new film provides Herzog with an occasion to return to his beloved Andes and Amazon, the land where men dream impossible dreams. The scene is some time at the beginning of the present century. The Amazon is teeming with adventurers, fortune seekers, rubber barons, exploiters, tycoons.

Fitzcarraldo, shot in English and post-synchronized in German (because it is a product of the "Bavarian culture," says Herzog), has a cast which, like the adventurous population of the period, is cosmopolitan. Fitzcarraldo is played by Klaus Kinski (a German of recent Polish extraction, born Claus Nakszynski near Danzig). His character is presumably some kind of South American, but of Irish descent, the uncorrupted family named being "Fitzgerald." Claudia Cardinale (in real life an Italian raised in French North Africa, bilingual in French and Italian) plays his mistress Molly, a name which seems to suggest an ancestry either American or British. The actor playing the leading rubber baron is an English-speaking Brazilian. Other leading actors are Mexican. The Indians, however, are Amazonian Indians, some of them real *Kopfjäger* (headhunters). And this whole primitive back country is caught up in the fever of the great rubber boom, not unlike (it will be noticed) the great gold and silver booms that once exploded throughout the American West.

THE film's opening scene shows the aged Sarah Bernhardt (played by a drag queen) at a boom-town opera house in the middle of the Brazilian jungle, miming the words to Verdi's *Hernani* as a professional soprano sings the role from a platform in the orchestra pit. The leading male role is sung by the great Enrico Caruso (unhistorical; he never got closer than Rio de Janeiro). In the audience are Fitzcarraldo and Molly, for Fitzcarraldo's love of opera is rabid. He is a bankrupt, having ruined himself in an attempt to build a Trans-Andean Railroad, and his one passionate dream now is to build another, grander opera house in another Amazonian boom town, back in Peru, fit to receive Caruso, his idol. Fitzcarraldo, in short, lives for art.

His ambitious project will re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quire some capital, of course, and Fitzcarraldo, financed by Molly, who is the madam of the most luxurious bordello in Iquitos, the Peruvian boom town, secures a franchise on a large area of rubber forest, which will be his to exploit. Molly's money also allows him to buy a large river steamer to transport his rubber. The only problem is that this jungle district lies up an Amazonian tributary beyond the *Pongo das Mortes* (Rapids of Death), considered unpassable by any large vessel.

Fitzcarraldo and his crew set out nonetheless, his plan, as it is gradually revealed, being to circumvent the *Pongo das Mortes* by steaming up a different tributary and then reaching his franchised territory by dragging the ship over a mountain from one river to the next. And so Fitzcarraldo steams bravely up the Amazon, with an early gramophone mounted on the bridge of his ship, acoustic trumpet and all, blaring Caruso records at the tropical rain forest.

One of the early poems of Ezra Pound, of all people, ends with these lines:

> And I would rather have
> my sweet,
> Though rose-leaves die of
> grieving,
> Than do high deeds in
> Hungary
> To pass all men's
> believing.

But you will never find Werner Herzog kissing his sweet while there are high deeds to do in Hungary or anyplace else. The crew rebels. Indians attack. There are wonderful shots of the white ship proceeding upstream as drumbeats (actually African) echo between the great green walls of jungle on either side of the river, and other stunning shots of mist rising above the rain forest in the light of dawn.

Perhaps the most beautiful scene in the film is when Fitzcarraldo and his remaining crewmen turn, in the twilight, to see that a flotilla of Indian boats has suddenly appeared astern and giant trees are being toppled to block the river. They are cut off. If they resist they will simply be slaughtered, so they allow the Indians to climb aboard, and Fitzcarraldo and his officers try to swallow food in their mess as a cohort of painted Indians watches them with strange solemnity.

These Indians, we are told, have been crisscrossing the Amazon basin for generations looking for a White God who will lead them beyond the illusions of everyday life to the reality of dreams, to a life without sorrow or death. They rapidly conclude (to my relief) that Fitzcarraldo is no White God, but that his White Ship, on the other hand, is holy. And they agree, with Fitzcarraldo providing pulleys, tackle, and the necessary winches, to drag the ship over the mountain, exactly where Fitzcarraldo wants it dragged. (How could he have known in advance that he would find this available manpower?) The hauling of the ship over the mountain Herzog has called the film's "central metaphor," and over the mountain, indeed, it goes.

In the movie's wild denouement, with the ship safely afloat in the new river, the Indians cut it loose in the middle of the night, and when Fitzcarraldo and his men awaken they find themselves being swiftly drawn into the very rapids they have gone to all this trouble to avoid. (The Indians think the Holy White Ship will pacify the angry spirit of the river, or some such.) Again, there are wonderful shots, this time of the ship running the rapids, but it comes safely through, if somewhat battered.

Fitzcarraldo, however, is bankrupt again as his rubber franchise has run out. He has only enough money, after selling his ship, to hire an opera company, bring it in along the river, and have it perform Bellini's *I Puritani* for the town from shipboard. Fitzcarraldo has sworn he would bring opera to Iquitos. He is bankrupt, but he has done it. Molly appears quite delighted at having lost every penny of her investment.

ASIDE from improbabilities of plotting—which I am inclined to let pass—there are a number of things wrong with this movie. I began to get the feeling that there would be large cloying areas in the film, and that in a very large way it would be unhistorical, when, in a sequence shortly following Caruso and Sarah Bernhardt at the opera, I saw a raffish, bohemian Fitzcarraldo relaxing in his tacky riverside shanty surrounded by small pigs and loving Indian children. Because the Indians love Fitzcarraldo, you see, and he loves them. Even the pigs know a nice person when they see one.

I was next dismayed when I realized that Fitzcarraldo was going to make a habit of consorting with prostitutes, and on their own level, and that Fitzcarraldo, in fact, was in a manner of speaking Madame Molly's pimp. I was also startled to notice that Molly and her whores were well received in polite Peruvian society, by the respectable wives of the country's rubber barons, no less. And my feeling turned to dismay again when I observed that Fitzcarraldo quite evidently despised money, which suggested, although Herzog had doubtless read up on his local Amazonian history, that he had not given much study to opera impresarios, who never despise money.

In fact, the whole social setting in Iquitos, before Fitzcarraldo sets out on his epic journey, led me to conclude that Herzog had completely misrepresented both the men who built operas and the men who wrested rubber from the Amazonian jungle, for the rubber barons in *Fitzcarraldo* are a dissolute, pleasure-loving lot. It is a platitude that the tycoons who built opera houses did not do so for love of music, and it should be equally apparent, to anyone who has read their biographies, that the tycoons who built railroads, say, did not do so for love of pleasure. As Cornelius Vanderbilt lay dying of cancer, his doctor suggested some champagne to lighten his spirits, but a lifetime of frugality had bred habits that were too strong to break and the tough old buccaneer announced grittily that a little "fizz water" would do just as well. And that was Cornelius Vanderbilt.

The fact is that the tycoons who built railroads and steamships and dug mines and made fortunes in copper or rubber or tin were harsh men. They were not sybarites or sensualists. Furthermore, they did not for one flickering instant con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sider Indians, West Indians, East Indians, blacks, browns, or the "heathen Chinee" their equals. An Amazonian rubber baron (Fitzcarraldo now) would no more have felt at one with his Indians than Cecil Rhodes felt at one with the Africans he sent down into his mines. If one is to admire men of this sort, there is no point admiring them for what they were not.

Herzog has attempted to get around this by creating an opera-loving aspiring baron somewhat in his own image, a bohemian tycoon —a little bit of Ernest Dowson perhaps, a little bit of Baudelaire—as if the fact that Fitzcarraldo was doing it all for art would automatically make him both an equalitarian and a humanitarian. But despots from King Cheops on down have sent men to their death for art, and Werner Herzog, as we shall see, was willing to send men to their death to make his movie.

Another point: people do not advance major blocks of capital to scruffy, poetic pimps living in fly-blown shacks with pigs. And, from what I know of them, whorehouse madams are less given to such bursts of feckless generosity than most. Baudelaire was a great genius, but, atrociously unfair as this may seem, people would not have lent him money to dig the Suez Canal. Instead they lent it to Ferdinand de Lesseps, a scoundrel possibly, later convicted of misappropriation of funds in Panama. But his linen was impeccable.

All this applies mostly to the film's opening sequences, when the characters are given their ideological tags. Once the expedition is under way we see a different Fitzcarraldo. Indians are crushed beneath the hull of the ship while it is being hauled over the mountain, but Fitzcarraldo goes on. The hauling must continue! This is not only more in character for a rubber baron, opera baron, or any other kind of baron. It makes a better movie.

LONG before I learned of the hell that Herzog went through (and put others through) to make *Fitzcarraldo*, I was struck by a certain similarity of temperament between Herzog and Francis Coppola. The American director worships the strong, the bold, "those who dare," the hero, be he military or criminal. In *The Godfather* Don Corleone (lion-heart) asks, Is he a man? Will he die for what he believes in? The lines were no doubt written by Mario Puzo, but they are the real Coppola—who also, it should be remembered, wrote the excellent screenplay for *Patton*.

Now the liberal Left has obviously had its strong men, too, determined and resolute, but the raising of strength and force to the level of a cult, particularly when combined with a sense of national or racial destiny, has historically been a defining trait of the Right—often of the anti-democratic Right. The rightist political orientation of criminals is well known. Somewhere along the line, however, someone, or something, probably only the *Zeitgeist*, got to Coppola and convinced him that all this was very bad and he should be a humane, caring, liberal. The latest result was his recent, absolutely disastrous *One From the Heart*, whose only merit was that it satisfied Coppola's love of danger (another trait of the Right, need I recall), since it brought him to the edge of bankruptcy again and forced him to sell the new Hollywood studio he had created amid much hoopla such a short time before.

But the key film of the new, confused Coppola is, of course, *Apocalypse Now*. The movie contains some absolutely magnificent scenes, among them battle scenes (for, despite all, I hold Coppola to be a director of very considerable gifts), but it was finished in a state of miserable intellectual confusion, with several endings, the director buffeted in turn by Joseph Conrad (author of the original story), screenwriter John Milius (a self-styled "fascist"), Sir James Frazer, Marlon Brando, T. S. Eliot, Ho Chi Minh. . . . During the filming of *Apocalypse Now* in the Philippine jungle, disaster struck again and again, first a hurricane, then a heart attack which felled Martin Sheen, who plays Captain Willard, the protagonist. And it seems more than a coincidence that of all the major films to have been produced in recent decades, the two on which the gods brought down the most spectacular calamities were made by two men of such a similar, danger-seeking temperament as Francis Coppola and Werner Herzog.

AS IT happens, a quite wonderful documentary has been done by director Les Blank on the making of *Fitzcarraldo*, a documentary I recommend enthusiastically to anyone who has any interest at all in the making of films. The Amazon is still filled with the same murderous Indians as at the time of Fitzcarraldo himself. As the production goes forward, men die. Others fall sick. Some turn bitter. Some lose heart. The ship gets stuck on the mountain; it cannot be hauled up. (This is no metaphor; this is literal.) But the valiant crew members struggle onward. Their leader has had a vision! They must go forward! Asked at one of the many points of breakdown if he is going to give up, Herzog shakes his head in determined rejection. If he were to surrender, he says, "I would be a man without dreams." And the documentary is called *The Burden of Dreams*. It will not tell you about the routine manufacture of an ordinary Hollywood movie. There is no talk of "dailies," or "answer prints," or "negative cost." But it is the most profoundly illuminating film ever devoted to the personality of a moviemaker. And it is a tale of heroic adventure in its own right. Even its ironies are heroic.

In 1977, Werner Herzog made his first, exploratory expedition into the equatorial jungle of northern Peru to the headwaters of the Amazon, looking for the proper settings for *Fitzcarraldo*. At this point the film was intended to be his first in English, aimed at a large commercial audience. Jack Nicholson was to play Fitzcarraldo, Mick Jagger a major supporting role. Herzog put all his savings into the project (again, the Coppola style), bought a house in Iquitos to serve as a base, refitted two 300-ton steamships, recruited hundreds of Indians, and built a production camp at his chosen location, deep in the tropical rain forest.

In late 1977, only months before shooting was to start, Mick Jagger was still in, as now was Claudia Cardinale, but Nicholson was out,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

replaced by Warren Oates. This was the least of Herzog's troubles. The production camp was only 25 miles away from the Ecuador border, and Ecuador and Peru, never very friendly, were preparing for another of their border wars. The jungle was filled with Peruvian troops, and it was also filled with Aguaruna Indians, a fierce bunch brimming with resentments. Lima was encouraging new settlers to increase its hold on the territory, which the Aguarunas did not like at all. What is more, they did not like Herzog's movie. They were sick and tired of seeing Indians portrayed as primitive savages. They were Peruvians!

Moreover, they bore no love for this Fitzcarraldo. For there had been a real Fitzcarraldo, known in those parts, and the memory he had left behind was dark. The Aguarunas Council claimed that the real Fitzcarraldo had been very wicked to Indians, mistreating them and enslaving them and forcing them to drag ships, and they wanted no part of this movie that made him look like some kind of goody-goody. There were death threats. Whereupon (this seems lunatic, but Herzog swears to it), German leftists appeared on the scene with photographs of Nazi death camps, showing great piles of corpses, and told the Aguarunas that this was what Herzog was planning to do to them; he was going to boil their bodies down into lard. On December 1, 1979, while part of Herzog's crew was still there, armed Indians surrounded the camp and ordered everyone to leave, and then, the camp empty, burned it to the ground. The remains of Herzog's crew fled downstream in a canoe, flying the white flag.

Now Amnesty International got into the act, issuing an Urgent Action bulletin when two Indians and a French agronomist were jailed by Peruvian authorities in connection with the incident. Amnesty International asked Herzog to intervene on behalf of the prisoners, and somehow this was construed as meaning that Herzog had demanded their arrest, and soon the world press was running reports that Amnesty International had accused Werner Herzog of violating Indians' human rights. This made Herzog all bitter and angry. Here he had come with such love in his heart, and it was all being so viciously misunderstood.

A YEAR and several million dollars later, in November 1980, the *Fitzcarraldo* production camp had been moved 1,500 miles to the south, into another part of the jungle, somewhere near Bolivia this time. Four weeks before the starting date, Warren Oates, blenching at the prospect of three months in the Amazonian jungle, backed out, leaving *Fitzcarraldo* with no leading man, dead in the water.

But two months later, in January 1981, Herzog was back with Jason Robards. Miraculously, shooting started. Robards, from the footage I have seen, was very good. Mick Jagger was superb. Jagger had braved a Peruvian regional general strike when other star actors had refused to leave their hotel rooms for fear that there would be shooting, as in Nicaragua, confirming my long-held suspicion that some rock stars—despite their reputation—are made of stern stuff.

Soon things were going swingingly. The production was ahead of schedule. After six weeks of shooting some 30 percent of the film was in the can—when Jason Robards came down with a severe case of amoebic dysentery. A story in the New York *Times* reported that Robards had told friends there were dangerous scenes in the film, with a ship running the rapids, and flights in unsafe aircraft. People had been killed, others injured. Herzog wore a death's head tattooed on his shoulder and had declared long ago that a film was worth more than human life, and perhaps this made Robards nervous. He was also suffering from bronchitis, fainting spells, loss of appetite, insomnia, and depression.

Once safe in Connecticut, Robards sent word that his doctor had forbidden him under any conditions to return to the set. So Herzog had shot 30 percent of the film for nothing, and would have to start all over again. Mick Jagger had to drop out here as well. He was full of fight. The spirit was willing, and the flesh was willing, but he had major commitments for a new Rolling Stones album and a concert tour. And once again the film was dead in the water. Herzog was so disappointed to lose Jagger that he suppressed his role completely.

WHITHER *Fitzcarraldo*? For two months, during which he left much of his crew in the jungle, Herzog searched the highways and byways of the entertainment world for a new leading man, and finally settled on Klaus Kinski, star of his first success, *Aguirre*, and two of his other major films, *Nosferatu* and *Wozzeck*. The relationship between Herzog and Kinski I do not pretend to understand. It seems based to a large extent on screaming fights (referred to by Herzog as "our craziness"), but the two clearly have some kind of *modus vivendi*. "Making allowance for his fits of rage," Herzog wrote in a letter, "Kinski is for me a calming influence on this production, because he really gets inside his role with everything he's got and, even in the toughest situations, never loses sight of the total picture." I know not what land of dreams these two German madmen come from, but they deliver. The film would have to be converted from an English-language movie to a German-language movie, and Fitzcarraldo would not be an Irishman but someone of Irish descent, but still, Herzog had a picture. And in April 1981, it was once more unto the breach. The jungle camp now had a new name: *Peliculo o Muerte*, "The Film or Death."

But they still had this problem of dragging a beautiful, white, 300-ton, triple-deck river steamer up over a mountain. There was a precedent. Back in the early days of the Peruvian rubber boom, the historical Fitzcarraldo, that White Devil, *had* hauled a ship overland from one river to another, but it had been only a fraction of the size of Herzog's ship, and he had disassembled it and made his enslaved Indians drag it across in eight sections. Herzog, however, had said many times that what he wanted was the "challenge of the impossible," and if there was a harder way

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to do something, he would usually find it. He had gone thousands of miles into the jungle for the atmosphere, which he felt would "bring out" something different in actors and crew, while freely admitting he could have shot the whole film in the vicinity of Iquitos. And now he wanted to see the ship, the whole ship, ascending a mountain in the jungle. He'd had this vision.

A Brazilian engineer flew in to design a system of winches and pulleys and cables, which with swarms of Indians pushing away at capstans would seem to be towing the ship up the hill. They cheated a little, since a D-8 Caterpillar earthmover would also be doing some of the towing, but the engineer guaranteed the system for a 20-degree slope. The trouble was that Herzog did not want a 20-degree slope. He wanted a *40*-degree slope, which would be extremely dangerous. Because with the ship and the Indians confined to a narrow trench, if anything gave—with cables flying through the air—an estimated 20 to 30 people would be killed. Herzog argued that, no, only 5 people would be killed, and insisted on 40 degrees. The engineer quit in protest.

LIFE, meanwhile, was chugging along in its humdrum way. Indians were shooting each other with arrows, dying of this and that. War parties were setting out. Herzog had to import a crew of prostitutes, otherwise his Indians would have started molesting women from neighboring tribes, which could have set off a real war. Two airplanes crashed on takeoff from a jungle airstrip, seriously injuring half-a-dozen people. The Caterpillar earthmover kept breaking down, getting hopelessly mired, falling into ditches. Equatorial rains poured down, the heaviest in twenty-five years. Down on the river the duplicate steamship ran the rapids, crashing into rock canyon walls. The director of photography (Thomas Mauch), with his eye to the camera, got a terrible bloody gash on his forehead, and sat on the deck while Kinski and the others bound his wounds. They seem in the documentary to be engaged in desperate battle, as I suppose they were.

At ship number one, all was now ready for the big try at 40 degrees. The chances of catastrophe were estimated at 70 percent. But that meant the chance of success was a full 30 percent. Who knows? No one might get killed at all. The ship's bow was already out of the water. Indians strained at their capstans, cables hummed, the Caterpillar D-8 belched noisily. The ship started up the steep trench—when suddenly a great coupling snapped. Amazingly, no cables flew through the air and no one died, but the ship was motionless. And it remained so for months. Herzog's "central metaphor" was stuck halfway up a hill in the Amazon.

Now was a time to try men's souls. Kinski was in a fury. "This much idiot no one has ever been in the world!" In the documentary, we see Herzog, brooding. When it comes to imposing his will on the universe, Herzog is something of a megalomaniac, but now even he is morbid, muttering curses on the landscape, the jungle. Soon, talking to the camera, he has a positive tantrum.

FOR if Herzog has his central metaphor, I, you see, have a central metaphor of my own. And, in my metaphor, Herzog is a modern German Aguirre who, as the result of a terrible misunderstanding, has somehow joined both the American Friends Service Committee and the Sierra Club. In the early parts of the documentary we see Herzog positively doting on the Indians, the jungle, and the primitiveness of it all, the harmony of nature untouched by the corrupting hand of civilization. The Indians are "lions," he says proudly. "I wouldn't want to live in a world where there are no lions anymore." He expresses contempt for "cows in the field" (domesticated animals), wants to protect his Indians from "contamination" by Western culture. When Michael Goodwin (who wrote the commentary of *Burden of Dreams* as well as an excellent account* of the expedition) remarks on children playing amid raw sewage in the river back at Iquitos, Herzog answers smugly, "You speak as an American. Americans are obsessed with hygiene. A society that overstresses cleanliness is not far away from genocide. The children don't care. . . . That's a kind of life that people have accepted, and they like it. It's very natural." So all nature is in harmony—sewage, native children, lions, Indians, the jungle—and only civilized man is vile. That is, nature is in harmony provided it does not cross Werner Herzog. When it crosses Werner Herzog, it's a different story.

"The jungle is full of obscenity," he rages darkly, with his ship stuck on the hill:

> Nature here is vile and base! I see fornication and asphyxiation and choking and fighting for survival and growing and rotting. The trees here are in misery. The birds here are in misery—they don't sing, they just shriek in pain. Erotic? No! There is an overwhelming fornication! There is a curse on this landscape, and whoever goes too deep into it has a share of this curse! We are cursed for what we are doing here! It is a land that God, if He exists, has created in anger! There is no order here, no harmony in the universe! The only harmony is of overwhelming, collective murder! It is a vile, base, obscenity! We don't belong here! *There is an overwhelming lack of order!* Even the stars here are a mess. They have no constellations. They just have chaos. There is no harmony! I hate it!

Herzog stops, as if thinking that if he says this, the whole edifice crumbles.

"No, I don't hate it," he says grudgingly. "I *love* it." He pauses moodily. "But it's against my better judgment."

Months later, a construction crew came from Lima and, with heavier equipment, hauled Fitzcarraldo's ship to the top of the mountain, whence it slid down into the second river. Having experienced the heaviest rains in twenty-five years, however, Herzog now had to wait out the longest dry season in recorded history. But at last, with the film's emergency funding almost gone, the rains came again and flooded the river, and Herzog sailed one of his ships triumphantly down-

* "Herzog, the God of Wrath," *American Film*, June 1982.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stream to Iquitos for the final sequence of his picture. And now he has brought this picture to New York, and it has been a tremendous saga, and I am glad he made it.

THERE are parts of *Fitzcarraldo* I cannot abide. I cannot bear the hero when he is a goody-goody, and he is a goody-goody a lot. Watching the film, I do not believe for one second that there ever was or ever could be a man so lovable, so benevolent, and so humane, without a drop of meanness in his body, and that by a stroke of divine providence a few thousand Indians would volunteer to haul a 300-ton steamer over a mountain for him. This character is not only impossible, he is silly (and earns titters from audiences at some of his beauty-loving moments).

Still, there is something I like about *Fitzcarraldo*: the sense of mission, half-mad, obsessive. And there is something that draws me to Herzog himself. He certainly picks up the gauntlet. When a distinguished German film historian, a friend of mine, Lotte Eisner, was sick in Paris, Herzog swore he would walk on foot from Munich to Paris to make her well. And he not only walked the 600 miles on foot to Paris in the dead of winter, but Lotte Eisner, with the help of God, I suppose, got well.

But the basic image of Herzog's work, as he has said himself, is the myth of Sisyphus, straining forever against his rock. Herzog does not promise victory. He promises struggle. Just what Herzog is struggling for, of course, is something about which I might harbor dark suspicions.

Herzog was born Werner Stipetic —as he would put it, of Croatian and Gypsy "blood." Raised in his native Bavaria, he recently displayed sharp displeasure at being hailed as a shining example of the New "German" Cinema, affirming, in some pique, that he was a Bavarian. His homeland, he said, was the Bavaria of Ludwig II ("Mad Ludwig"), the builder of "dream castles," not the Germany of the Prussian Wilhelm II, who was "only capable of starting a world war." From Herzog's tirade one would never have suspected that Adolf Hitler (of mixed "blood," from the German culture's Austrian periphery, like the family of Herzog himself) got his political start in this same Bavaria, and that if Hitler later chose Nuremberg, also in Bavaria, as the Nazis' shrine city, holding there the party's annual congress, it was because Bavaria was a notorious Nazi stronghold.

In all, Herzog's remarks seemed an entirely invidious and dishonest attempt to dump the onus of any past German misdeeds on the north Germans, particularly the Prussians, as if Bavarians were a race of poets —a deceit the kindest explanation for which would be a sort of *pseudologica fantastica*, a trait of which Herzog shows considerable evidence, along with a distinct touch of megalomania. Herzog's official biography, for instance, states (on the basis of assertions that could only have come from the director himself) that as a young man he seriously attempted to found "a self-governing territory in the vicinity of Guatemala."

So if I consider Herzog's American Friends/Sierra Club side frankly absurd, I find his Man of Destiny side both mythomanic and disquieting. Against the rising chorus of hosannas for Herzog and *Fitzcarraldo*, I must record my subjective reaction. I have studied the film, the film about the film, attended Herzog's press conference, noted his relationship to the Amazonian Indians, his egomania, his strange humorlessness, his peculiar moments of real hurt followed by ruthlessness, his willingness to sacrifice human life, the death's head.

I am struggling valiantly to admire Werner Herzog. I would like to see in him an artistic sign that European society is not all tuckered out, that it still believes in itself. My effort, however, might be against my better judgment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letters from Readers

Continued from page 15

The Begin government accused Helmut Schmidt, then Chancellor of Germany, of Holocaust crimes. When the Pope gave an audience to Yasir Arafat, Israel, rather than making a political criticism, accused the Vatican . . . of complicity in the Holocaust. . . .

Why these attacks on the United States, Israel's ally? On the Vatican? Why make enemies of the whole anti-Soviet bloc?

I never suspected Begin of being a statesman, or even a diplomat, but neither can he be seen as a fool who is not aware of the grave political consequences of such a policy. I feel that this policy is the iceberg, and what happened in Beirut is merely the tip of the iceberg. While military action should be action of the last resort, it appears that military actions and responses are becoming the centerpiece of the Begin government. The more enemies his policy creates, the more justified is the reliance on military power. . . .

How can the Begin government pursue such a risky policy? Everyone who understands Soviet policy knows that its constant is anti-Americanism and that its anti-Israel stance is simply a part of its overall anti-Americanism. If the Arabs prove to be allies of no importance, the Soviets may be more than willing to change from anti-Semitism to philo-Semitism. Is the policy of the Begin government simply playing with such an option in order to make the U.S. government aware that it must respect Israel's freedom of action, or is something more behind it?

The Begin government is not pro-American. It refuses to consider the give and take involved in any honest alliance, and for this it deserves determined criticism. . . .

EUGEN LOEBL
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It seems to me that Norman Podhoretz is leaning over backward to avoid facing a fact that is far more involved here than an "increase in anti-Semitism."

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc. have been handing out very large contracts in the U.S. over the years. Starting with the Carter administration, the Arabs have been encouraged to put increased pressure on these U.S. contractors to put pressure in turn on Congressmen in their behalf. . . . This . . . is only one of several kinds of commercial and cultural inroads currently being made by the Arabs. . . .

I recall a recent PLO statement that the real battle is for U.S. public opinion, and that $100 million is to be spent in the U.S. for that purpose. Whether or not that is the actual figure, there is reason to expect an increase in the already huge expenditures by the Saudis and others in the U.S. . . .

It may be more cultural to talk of anti-Semitism than of such mundane things as money and economics. But the fact is that the Arabs are becoming our new landlords with consequent influence on Congress and the press for anti-Israel purposes. . . .

IRVING ZUCKERMAN
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Notwithstanding Norman Podhoretz's well-reasoned attack, . . . I am left with a dissatisfied feeling that we are riding the wrong horse. Non-Jews are not undone by the charge of anti-Semitism; they may even be reinforced at having "touched a nerve" of Jewish intellectuals. *They* appear to be in the mainstream of newly perceived American interests. . . . The task is, rather, to question if the new mainstream preferences are in the interests of the U.S. in the long run. . . . To the extent that Jewish goals can be made to coincide with mainstream American interests, we can gain friends. . . .

We shall not forget the six million, but the rest of the world will. Better to accept and deal with this inevitability than to spend our shots on impassioned reminders. For me, our motto should be "remember the AWACS"; in the showdown, we simply did not have the votes.

WILLIAM SELTZER
Cherry Hill, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Perhaps Norman Podhoretz has inadequately stressed the factor of envy. Envy is an element of anti-Semitism, and the Israeli military triumph in Lebanon contrasts so vividly with our own pusillanimous failure in Vietnam.

ROBERT W. WILSON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have long admired Norman Podhoretz as one of the most lucid and intellectually honest dialecticians in this country. I still do.

However, with respect to "J'Accuse," while I agree with his criticism of the traducers of Israel, . . . I was disappointed that he left out almost completely any recognition of the issue which I believe stimulated these excessive comments: the reckless disregard by Israel of the interests of its American ally. . . .

JOEL W. WESTBROOK
San Antonio, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Norman Podhoretz has looked beneath the cloak of Christian righteousness to note that the Lebanese incursion gave instant license to vent a lingering but always alive antipathy toward Jews —in and out of Israel. Somewhere in the dark recesses of the Christian mind is an image of the Jew compelled to suffer his inexorable fate as the endlessly wandering pariah. He must never know peace. The image of the Jew as a defender of his land and his home does not fit in with this fantasy. . . .

The vehemence against Israel is without precedent. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, its earlier marches into other lands, the wars and mass murders of Third World countries against their own and neighboring populations are all taken by the world as footnotes to a passing history, but Israel's defensive strikes, its sacrifices in blood to live as a free nation have been unwelcome for decades. . . .

CHARLES ANSELL
Sherman Oaks, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Why would reporters claiming fairness and regard for Israel want to damn the little country that has had to fight for its life since its birth and even before? I have found the answer, after much reflection, in human nature and Western culture. Human beings both admire and envy those who are distinctive or conspicuous, for such distinctiveness seems to be a sign of importance. . . .

. . . Distinctiveness and religiosity have characterized the Jews at least since the Babylonian Exile, when they first came into contact with another culture. . . . With the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

advent of Christianity, antagonism deepened when Jews refused to abandon their faith and accept the Christian messiah. This refusal . . . probably also explains the charge of deicide against the Jewish people for a deed allegedly committed centuries before. In the eyes of the Church leaders, the deicide was not in the past, but was being committed by their Jewish contemporaries when they refused to acknowledge Jesus as the messiah foretold by the prophets. Anti-Semitism thus became an important strand of Christian, and thereby of Western, culture.

In our own day . . . antagonism to the Jews because of their distinctiveness and historical religiosity, reinforced by Christian and Western culture, has found particular expression in the world's attitude to Israel, . . . which has aroused the envy of the Arab countries and to some degree also reminds the world of the Holocaust and its own guilt. Prejudice against the Jewish state surfaces whenever Israel seeks to assert its right to live and shape its own destiny. . . .

[Rabbi] NATHAN A. BARACK
Newtonville, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read with interest Norman Podhoretz's exposé of the double standard used by the world in judging Israel. I had suspected that some variant of this double standard was involved in Pope John Paul II's meeting with Arafat, and so decided to perform an experiment to test the Pope's impartiality. I compared papal interventions for two recent events which overlap both temporally and geographically in the Middle East: the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the ongoing Iraqi-Iranian war. My research was limited to the opening date of each event and the subsequent fifteen days, as reported in the New York *Times*. What I found was that the Pope exhorted the Israelis on three separate occasions (June 8, 13, and 17) but exhorted no one in connection with the Iran-Iraq war. . . .

CHARLES S. BERDIANSKY
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The press and television analysts, be they never so anti-Semitic, do not invent the news to which they respond, however bigotedly. Nor could they, even if they wished to, prevent the growth of the suspicion in this country that the Israeli cam-

Here's what educators privately know—but hesitate to tell you—about your child's school

- **that massive "busing" has not been worth the price we're paying for it.**
- **that millions are being spent on students who haven't a prayer of earning a college degree.**
- **that striking teachers set an example that leads young people into lawlessness.**
- **that efforts to achieve quality *and* equality in education may be wreaking havoc upon our system.**
- **that innovation can create more problems than it solves.**

"Educators, in the privacy of their own thoughts as citizens and parents, will concur with more of what is in this book than they will admit publicly," says Theodore M. Black.

At last, here's an educator who's not afraid to tell it like it is, who's willing to own up to what's really going on in our schools today, to name names as he cites our "crimes against education": that government funding has led hundreds of students into fraud and cheating, that taxing real property is absolutely the wrong way to finance education, that a liberal coalition has set out to destroy private schools, that much desegregation research is virtually worthless, that colleges are basing their investment decisions on misguided moral judgments.

For eleven years, from 1969 to 1980, Theodore M. Black served on the New York State Board of Regents, the oldest and most powerful school board in the country. For the last five years he was Chancellor, often taking unconventional stands on the controversial issues of those turbulent times.

Now, from his varied experience as an educator and his strong belief that we *can* achieve excellence in education, he has put his often iconoclastic ideas and always keen insights into a hard-hitting, readable new book that confronts education head-on.

Without equivocation, he comments upon: ■ *disruption in the classroom* ■ *decreased teacher productivity* ■ *drugs* ■ *sex education* ■ *testing* ■ *library censorship* ■ *the teaching of evolution* ■ *handicapped students* ■ *financing schools* ■ *affirmative action* ■ *vouchers and tax rebates* ■ and other concerns.

Here is a book that you must read *now* if you are concerned about American education today. Leaders have praised it, early readers have been challenged by its bold ideas. Liberals, conservatives, or somewhere in-between—it will stimulate you to action, for it cannot be ignored. At your bookseller or mail the coupon below to order.

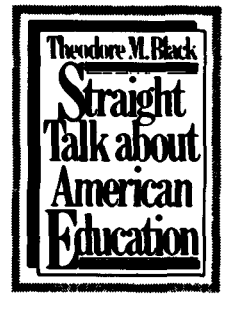
"Read it. Tomorrow you may not be able to."
—William F. Buckley

"Challenging."
—Malcolm Forbes

"A terrific job."
—Melvin R. Laird

"Must reading."
—John Gambling

"Ted Black may well become the Tom Paine of American education."
—Chester E. Finn



HBJ HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVICH, INC.
1250 Sixth Avenue, San Diego, CA 92101

Please send me _____ copies of **STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT AMERICAN EDUCATION.** My payment of $14.95 each, plus $1.50 per copy postage and handling, is enclosed. If I am not satisfied, I may return the book(s) within 10 days for a full refund. (Please add applicable sales tax.) ☐ Check enclosed

Charge my credit card: _____ (name of card)

Card Number: _____

Expiration date: _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

CY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paign in Lebanon is the prelude to the incorporation of the occupied territories. That hypothesis does, after all, make sense of a war which has been costly to Israel in men, equipment, and prestige. . . .

Nobody has any good reason to suppose that Israel will exhibit either spectacular virtue or spectacular vice in pursuing policies designed to preserve or extend its power. From this it does not follow, however, that the moralist may not judge Israel or any other country by higher standards than the evidence of world history would suggest. . . .

It may be, in some final analysis, futile to pass moral judgments in the international theater of politics, but then again it may not. Perhaps lives were saved because of American reaction to Sharon's bombing raids over West Beirut, perhaps the Pope has softened Arafat ever so slightly, although I do not expect him to take up the cowl or write poems to the sun. . . .

STANLEY PALUCH
Boulder, Colorado

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Quite apart from the references to me, I thought Norman Podhoretz's article was balderdash.

MARY MCGRORY
Washington *Post*
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Perhaps in Norman Podhoretz's experience . . . self-flagellation, the application of double standards, and inveterate anti-Semitism are inevitable concomitants of any criticism of Israel. In my experience they are not. It certainly is true that in Canada real anti-Semites raised their voices in response to events in Lebanon. But I was impressed by many letters to the editor which expressed directly or evinced a manifest sense of relief at being able to criticize openly this particular bit of Israeli behavior. I found no way to write these people off as objective anti-Semites, self-congratulatory Nazis emerging from their closets, or agents of the decline of the West. Instead, many of them seem to have been complaining of their having been subjected in the past to what Mr. Podhoretz now practices: bullying moralism that has made rational criticism of Israel seem beyond the pale of civilized discourse.

We must turn, we are told, from any concern with the events in Lebanon to a search for the real cause of the disproportionate reaction to those events. Perhaps so. But in his own brief and uncharacteristically jejune comments on Israeli policy and actions Mr. Podhoretz ignores a number of shifts in Israeli policy toward the West Bank and the Golan undertaken by the present government. Though he shows us an Israel whose policy (apart from its exemplary democracy) is determined entirely by Israel's opponents, it is at least possible, surely, that policies initiated in Israel could have exacerbated relations with its neighbors. And the successive and differing justifications for the successive extensions of the Israeli whatever-it-was (Mr. Podhoretz has forbidden any of us to refer to it as an invasion) might conceivably cause disquiet somewhere. But no—to recognize this or to assert it would brand me a sniveling "well-wisher." . . .

This really will not do. My Canadian letter-writers had found reason in Israel's own behavior to abandon the heretofore well-observed convention that one does not criticize Israel. The basis for that consensus had, quite simply, deteriorated, influenced in part by Israeli actions—not by a supposititious endemic anti-Semitism and a craven loss of nerve in the West. From now on, for these people, moral one-upmanship will have to be replaced by what Mr. Podhoretz claims to cherish: single-standard evaluation of Israel. Is this a gain or a loss?

The double-standard charge is a notoriously treacherous weapon, so often turning in the hand to slash its holder. As an outsider to peculiarly American quarrels, I merely wonder why Americans, who have put such (dare I use the word?) disproportionate funds into Israel, should now be debarred from treating it differently from El Salvador. If Israel were a private corporation benefiting so crucially from such investment, the United States would at least rate a seat on the board and a voice raised in meetings.

Mr. Podhoretz pursues the contemptible charge of Israeli Nazism valiantly into the swamps of political science where he slays it with evidence of Israel's devotion to democracy. This is importantly true, necessary to state, and inadequate. The charge can be readily discounted when it is mouthed by those rabid ideologists whose lust for rhetorical overkill COMMENTARY has so often documented.

But what of the spontaneous occurrence of this charge in quite unskilled and unrehearsed letter-writers to many newspapers? I have a suggestion for Mr. Podhoretz that I do not offer glibly or with intent to score cheap points. When the sins of the Nazis are pointed to again and again in order to justify every expedient of Israeli policy (and this has been done by too many unwise apologists), it should not surprise any of us that some people will leap to twist that weapon the other way once Israeli behavior even remotely resonates with any of the justifications Hitler used to employ. The complacent righteousness of some claims by the present Israeli government has offered such an opportunity—both to malevolent anti-Semites and to others simply tired of being bludgeoned into support of Israel once too often. This latter response is not evidence of the decline of the West, but the reaction of people who would be quite content to be the moral equals (but not the inferiors) of Israelis.

THEODORE OLSON
Willowdale, Ontario

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In the last few years COMMENTARY has taken an increasingly rigid position, . . . but the article by Norman Podhoretz in the September issue surpasses belief. Mr. Podhoretz is emboldened in his opinions when he finds that 17 out of 19 editorials were critical of the Lebanese incursion. He is angry that every administration in Washington seems to grow more unhappy with Israel as it proceeds. The Begin government no longer is willing to trade occupied territories for peace, but insists that Judea and Samaria are forever Jewish; this momentous switch has caused an immense drop in support for Israel, a decline intensified by both Begin's wild language and his willingness to use force on so many occasions. It is much easier to shout anti-Semitism than to consider these difficulties.

This shout is doubly outrageous. As regards Jews it is ludicrous. Many Jews like myself who have felt a sense of kinship with Israel and given moral and financial assistance for years are greatly disturbed by the Begin position (as of course many Israelis are), and most of us are not journalists or academics. It is senseless . . . to hint that disagreement is a form of self-hate. But to carry that logic into controversies with non-Jews is not sense-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less but dangerous. If you tell an uncertain person that to be a critic of Israel is to be a supporter of Hitler, he may well decide that he should reconsider Nazism. Crazy rhetoric usually backfires; one may disagree with George W. Ball on many points, but to attempt to convert him into a Jew-hater is sheer madness. . . .

JOSEPH LOSOS

St. Louis, Missouri

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

During thirty-plus years as a subscriber I've seen COMMENTARY change from a voice of enlightenment and humanism to a forum for increasingly narrow and rigid points of view. When I read Norman Podhoretz's strained efforts to blunt criticism of Israel's shameful and self-destructive behavior, I knew I'd had enough. I cast my no-confidence vote. Please cancel my subscription.

ROBERT R. KOHN, M.D.

Cleveland, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The critics cannot be unkind enough to Israel. The kind of thinking that reaches out far and wide to destroy its enemies is not the kind of thinking I would like to associate with Israel.

Look at the Jewish silence on the horrendous civilian casualties in Lebanon. Look at what Ariel Sharon said to Oriana Fallaci. Look at what Israel did to the Iraqi nuclear reactor. Look at the impudence of saying that Arafat's talking to the Pope is an unfriendly act. . . .

What Begin is doing is unforgivable. His keeping that thuggish Sharon is unforgivable. Mr. Podhoretz's defense of what Israel is doing is unforgivable. His silence in the face of those suffering because of Jewish aggression is unforgivable....

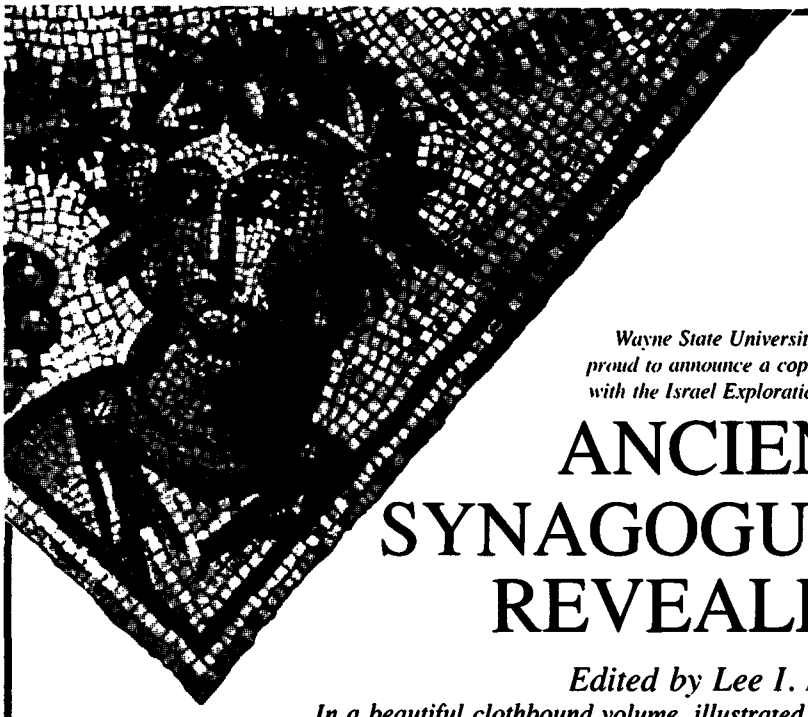
SERGIO M. GARCIA

Gary, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In this country, as most in the media and politics know, Israel has by far the most dedicated, well-financed, sophisticated, and comprehensive public-relations machinery of any nation on earth. The loyalty of this endless entourage is of course unquestioned. The machinery extends into all levels of U.S. politics as well as into every newspaper or magazine of any importance or influence. . . .

Norman Podhoretz claims that the Israelis launched a preemptive attack in 1967 and six days later



Wayne State University Press is proud to announce a copublication with the Israel Exploration Society

ANCIENT SYNAGOGUES REVEALED

Edited by Lee I. Levine

In a beautiful clothbound volume, illustrated, $24.00

"This volume is one of those rare books which is a must for every Jewish library and every Jewish home."*

Here is an illustrated survey of ancient synagogues throughout Israel and the Diaspora: Golan, Capernaum, Masada, En-Gedi. From Dura-Europos (Syria) to Naro (North Africa).

*"The faith of our people stands revealed in the synagogues which for centuries have preserved and enlarged it. . . . The Israel Exploration Society has produced an informative, stunning, and vital volume."—Professor Alfred Gottschalk, President, Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion.

Announcing a new annual volume . . .

THE JERUSALEM CATHEDRA

Studies in the History, Archaeology, Geography and Ethnography of the Land of Israel

Edited by Lee I. Levine

A copublication with the Izhak Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem

The Jerusalem Cathedra, a new annual volume, provides a regular forum for articles based on current academic research and archaeological discoveries concerning all aspects of the history and culture of the land of Israel.

Its contents include extensive treatment of the background of the Old and New Testament, adding to the understanding of Judaism and Christianity, and studies on the emergence and development of Zionism. *Vol. 1, illustrated, 368 pages, $25.00. Vol. 2, illustrated, about 300 pages, $25.00.*

wayne

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Leonard N. Simons Building
5959 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48202

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"found themselves" in possession of the West Bank. Does it matter that in the intervening years Menachem Begin has taken great and careful pains to explain that, despite what Camp David says, and despite the world's interpretation of Camp David, . . . the West Bank *belongs* to Israel because the Bible says so? . . .

. . . So far, one would have to conclude that Israel has indeed been undemocratic, expansionist, and repressive. Undemocratic, because of the removal of the mayors and subsequent political maneuvers; expansionist, because of the settlements policy and the avowed intention to annex every square inch of this land bequeathed to Israel by the Bible; and repressive, in the troubling penchant of Israeli officials to imprison those they dislike, and to explode bombs in the homes of those related to the troublemakers.

Now, as to anti-Semitism. The article suggests this phenomenon describes those who are prejudiced against both Arabic- and Hebrew-speaking Semites. . . . "J'Accuse" is itself an endless citation of how rotten Arabs are. Much is said about how regular and moral Israelis are; not a peep, not a condescending utterance that would accord Arabs a similar normality. The clearest, least twisted part of the article is its unreserved hatred of Arabs.

To borrow from Mr. Podhoretz's quite incredible last paragraph: is Mr. Podhoretz using the charge of anti-Semitism as a screen for his political designs? . . .

ROGER J. RUVOLO
Corrales, New Mexico

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although Norman Podhoretz wishes to believe that the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was intended to "liberate Lebanon from the PLO," and that it is ultimately to be seen as a defense of the "values of Western civilization as a whole"—he wrote this, of course, before the massacre in the refugee camps—his belief does not correspond either to the proclaimed intention of the Israeli government or the reports of the correspondents of major Israeli newspapers.

The *first* proclaimed intention of the government—others were proclaimed with each escalation of the invasion—was the liberation of Israel's northern settlements from PLO shelling (hence, the code name for the war, "Peace for Galilee"). This came as a surprise to many Israelis—most especially those inhabitants of the northern settlements who publicly protested the invasion—because, in fact, the PLO had complied with the July 14, 1981 cease-fire for one year, and it resumed the shelling only after the Israeli air raid on Beirut following the attempted assassination of an Israeli diplomat in London. (As it turned out, the assassination was not, as Israel claimed, the work of the PLO, but of an Arab group that is opposed to it!).

. . . Military correspondents of Israel's major newspapers had been warning for months that Sharon was looking for a pretext for a full-scale war in Lebanon in order to liquidate the PLO and thereby achieve the acquiescence of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in Begin's autonomy plan. . . .

But even if we were to follow Mr. Podhoretz's claim that the invasion was in the service of the values of Western civilization, it is difficult to follow his further claim that the condemnation of the massive destruction of lives and property that accompanied the invasion was motivated either by anti-Israel or anti-Semitic sentiments. Even the Begin cabinet—a group not exactly prominent for its dovish tendencies—complained about the magnitude of the Beirut bombing, especially when it continued after the PLO had formally consented to leave Lebanon. Apparently even they felt that the notion that it was necessary to destroy the city in order to save it was no more palatable in the case of Lebanon than it was in the case of Vietnam.

It is also difficult to follow Mr. Podhoretz's claim that those who apply a double standard in condemning the Israeli destruction are ipso facto anti-Semitic. After all, all Israeli governments, as well as the "Israel lobby," have been proclaiming year in and year out that the political and moral values of Israel are incomparably superior to those of its Arab neighbors (let alone of the PLO); indeed, that is the main ground for their contention that Israel has a special claim on the support of the Western democracies. When, then, the Israeli forces killed more civilians in Lebanon in three days than the PLO had killed in

You don't have to be religious to be Jewish

There is more than one Jewish tradition.

Judaism is more than a religion. It is a four thousand year old culture. It has a secular dimension, a secular history, secular roots. Einstein is as much a part of it as Moses. Freud is as much a star in it as Akiba. Throughout Jewish history there has been a non-establishment pragmatic humanistic tradition living alongside the official one. Most Jews, without knowing it, embrace it. **You** too may be part of this **other** secular tradition.

If you want to learn more about the **other** Judaism . . .

Send $4.00 to cover cost and postage of sample copy of the Journal to:

Society for Humanistic Judaism
28611 W. 12 Mile Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48018
(313) 478 7610

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Israel in thirty years, it was not necessary to be an anti-Semite to condemn those killings by the professed values of Israel itself.

Having said that, I hasten to add that I myself do not hold to, and I completely reject, the notion that Israel should be judged by a double standard. I believe that the bombing of Beirut (and other cities in Lebanon) is to be condemned as a terrorist action by the very same values by which the terrorist actions of the PLO have been persistently and almost universally condemned —unless, of course, it can be shown that "terrorism" is an appropriate term for the killing of civilians only when it is perpetrated from the ground rather than the sky, and by guerrilla forces rather than the army of a nation state.

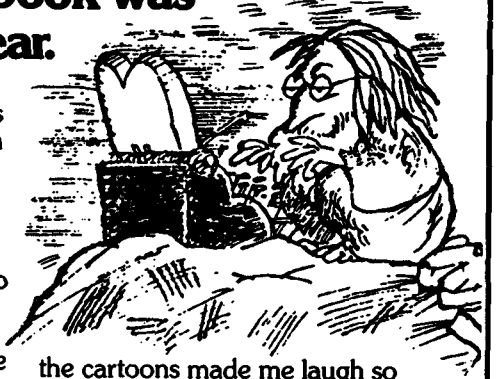
I reject the double standard because as a Zionist for fifty years, and a professional student of Israeli society for thirty, I have long subscribed to the Zionist notion of "normalization." That means, on the one hand, that I do not expect Israeli politicians to be superior in political wisdom or morality to any other politicians, and, on the other hand, that I totally reject the liberals' premise that the existence of the state of Israel must be justified by that (or any other) kind of superiority. That being the case, I believe that the actions of Israeli politicians are to be judged by the same standard by which we judge those of American, Burmese, Kenyan, Soviet —or any other—politicians. By that standard, the invasion of Lebanon and the massive and persistent bombing of Beirut were (in my judgment) acts of political immorality (and stupidity).

Indeed, I would claim that it is not the critics of Israeli action—whether in Lebanon or in the West Bank and Gaza—but its defenders who are guilty of applying a double standard, a reverse double standard. Thus, on the "normalization" assumption that Israel, like other nations, has its fair share (no more, but no less) of politically stupid and immoral politicians, is it credible that in *every* instance in which American governments (and those of the other Western democracies) have criticized an action of an Israeli government the latter was always right and the former always wrong? Although that conclusion is hard to credit, it has nevertheless been the consistent and officially proclaimed position of American Jewish "leaders."

FIFTH PRINTING
50,000 COPIES IN PRINT

Who's laughing?

Jews, gentiles, reviewers, rabbis, whole families, offices and communities...ever since this once-in-a-generation book was published last year.



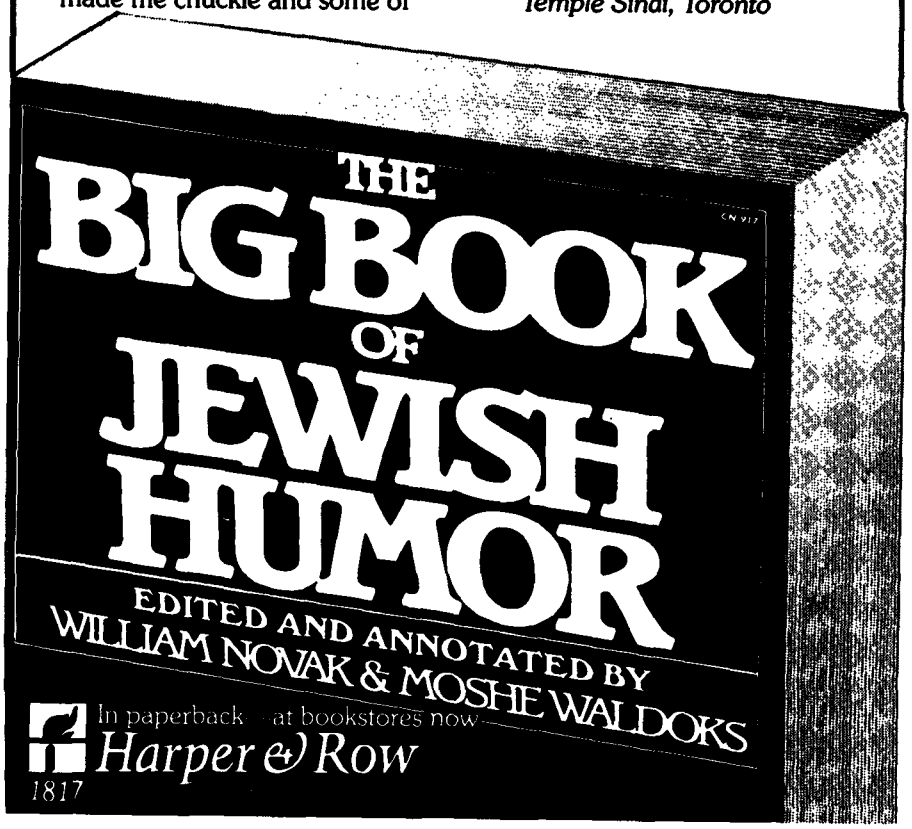
"If it's funny and it's Jewish, it's probably here.... A fine addition to any bookshelf and a terrific gift—even for yourself."
—*Hadassah*

"THE BIG BOOK OF JEWISH HUMOR is a wonderful book to read, to hold and to study.... All the Jewish greats are in this book.... There is not going to be a better book of Jewish humor for another generation.... Don't just sit there. Go out and buy it!"—*B'Nai B'Rith Messenger*

"A marvelous and exhaustive treasure... lavishly illustrated with cartoons, all superb."
—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"Superb.... Some of the stories made me chuckle and some of the cartoons made me laugh so hard that it brought tears to my eyes."
—*Rabbi Bernard S. Raskas, Temple Aaron, St. Paul*

"A *Dayenu* of Jewish wit; the old saws and the new guffaws—the most comprehensive and delightful work of its category in print."—*Rabbi Jordan Pearlson, Temple Sinai, Toronto*



In paperback at bookstores now
Harper & Row
1817

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Take, for example, the following continuous actions of the government in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank: the expansion of old and the formation of new settlements, the confiscation of Arab land, the suppression of civil liberties, the razing of the homes of the families of suspected terrorists, the gassing of dissident students and the wounding and killing of other protesters of Israeli policies, the forcible opening of striking shops, the firing and forced exile of mayors. Take, also, such single actions as the bombing of the nuclear reactor in Iraq, the annexation of the Golan Heights, and finally the invasion and bombings in Lebanon. In all of these cases, the governments of the United States and the other Western democracies (as well as a significant proportion of the Israeli population) criticized or condemned the actions, and in all of them, *without a single exception*, the American Jewish leadership both protested the criticisms and justified the actions. . . .

Such a double standard—the inability to believe that an Israeli government can be as immoral or stupid as the next one—was hardly creditable when it was applied to previous Israeli governments, but its application to the government of Menachem Begin (despite his record of terrorism as commander of the Irgun, which in those different times led to his condemnation and ostracism by the entire Zionist leadership) and of Ariel Sharon (despite his record of needless killing as an officer in a previous war, which led to the request by his commanding officer that he be recalled) is positively appalling.

It can only be hoped that the "explanations" coming from Jerusalem itself regarding the recent refugee-camp massacre will serve to remind some people that (for Judaism at least) the attribution of absolute rectitude and wisdom to anything less than the deity constitutes idolatry.

MELFORD E. SPIRO
Department of Anthropology
University of California
San Diego, California

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

My answers to most of the criticisms made above can be found in "J'Accuse" itself. Therefore, rather than repeating points I have already made to the best of my ability, I want to say something about the general response to "J'Accuse" because in itself it seems to me a phenomenon of great interest and significance. At COMMENTARY, and I imagine at other magazines too, twenty letters on a single piece is a heavy response; thus far, about 200 letters have come in on "J'Accuse." But what is even more unusual than the sheer numbers is the balance of negative to positive. Whenever an article, whether in COMMENTARY or in any other magazine, draws a lot of mail, most of it tends to be critical, for the simple reason that people are more impelled to write when they get angry than when they are pleased. In the case of "J'Accuse," however, perhaps 90 percent of the mail was enthusiastic, much of it wildly so. (Only a tiny sample of those letters appears above.)

THINGS of Science

Its an ideal gift for a birthday, a holiday, or just being nice to someone-perhaps to yourself.

Each month in the mail for a year, a surprise package containing materials and a booklet with easy to follow instructions for exciting experiments and demonstrations with background information on various science topics.

One mother wrote recently, "My son is greatly enjoying his subscription to THINGS of Science, and I compliment you on the range and unique nature of the topics."

THINGS of Science is designed for inquiring young minds 10 to 16. They enjoy, for example, exploring Afterimages, Light, Color, making Sundials, investigating Wind and Solar Power, ideas for Science Fairs, they may start a hobby, or decide on a career in science.

THINGS of Science is looked forward to all year. Send in your subscription now. Thank you.

Send to:

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Send gift card to read from:_____

1 year—$17.50. 2 years—$33.00 (save $2.00). Each additional member, at $16 (save $1.50 each). Send check or money order with order.

Note: Outside USA, additional postage and handling per member. Canada and Mexico—$6.50 per year; others—$9.00 a year. USA dollars or equivalent please.

SEND TO: THINGS OF SCIENCE, RD 1, BOX 130C NEWTOWN, PA 18940

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To put it plainly: in thirty years as a professional writer, I have never experienced anything like the response which has greeted this article; nor in twenty-five years as an editor have I seen anything remotely comparable happen to any other piece.

Not all these letters (not to mention dozens of phone calls) came from Jews, but most of them did, and I submit that they tell us a great deal about the feelings of American Jews toward Israel in the aftermath of the war in Lebanon. What they tell us is that passions are running very high in the Jewish community, that there is rage—and outrage—at the monstrous unfairness with which Israel has been treated in the media, and that there is a healthy anxiety over the appearance, for the first time since World War II, of brazenly anti-Semitic ideas and attitudes in respectable circles of American opinion.

No such feeling is evident, however, in the press response to "J'Accuse." On the contrary. Of the dozen or so columns and editorials which have commented on the piece, all but one (or, stretching things a bit, two), instead of denouncing the anti-Semitic eruption described and analyzed in "J'Accuse," denounce *me* for calling attention to the anti-Semitic character of the ideas and attitudes in question. Moreover, the published attacks on the article without exception misrepresent its argument by alleging that I label as anti-Semitic any and all criticisms of Menachem Begin or Ariel Sharon. Of course, as anyone who actually read the article knows, I took pains to say explicitly that *not* all the criticisms of Israel's operation in Lebanon were anti-Semitic. Indeed, I specifically cited the editorials on Lebanon in the New York *Times* which, while harsh on Israel and often unfair, were nevertheless "based on universally applied principles and tempered by a sense of balance in the distribution of blame," and therefore could not "and should not be stigmatized as anti-Semitic, however mistaken or dangerous to Israel one might consider them to be."

There has thus been a widespread refusal by the press to face up to the clear and irrefutable evidence that anti-Semitism has been at work in much of what has been written about Lebanon. This refusal is almost as distressing as the eruption of anti-Semitism itself. For anyone who reacts to obvious manifestations of anti-Semitism by denying their anti-Semitic character is in effect conferring legitimacy on them. After all, if such manifestations are not anti-Semitic, there is no reason to rule them out of order in civilized or rational discourse. Once licensed in this way, they are free to take root and spread—with what consequences, no one can foretell.

I have no quarrel with those of my correspondents and critics, including a few whose letters appear above, who say that anti-Semitism is not the *only* factor in the new wave of hostility to Israel. I myself say as much in the concluding pages of "J'Accuse" when I raise the issue of the Western failure of nerve. But I do have a quarrel with anyone who claims that anti-Semitism has played no role, or only a marginal one, in this hostility. I have an even greater quarrel with anyone who advances the despicable argument that the anti-Semitic attacks on Israel are not anti-Semitic because they are justified by Israel's behavior. This is precisely what Melford E. Spiro, for one, does in excoriating Israel while failing to say a single word against the anti-Semitism to which I pointed. So far as I am concerned, that alone would vitiate his interpretation of the war in Lebanon, even if it were not mistaken on almost every other point as well.

But I do not wish to place too much emphasis on Mr. Spiro and the small minority of American Jews who think as he does. This would only contribute to the false and dangerous notion that Israel has lost significant support among American Jews. The response to "J'Accuse"—not to mention the harder statistical evidence cited in last month's COMMENTARY by Earl Raab ("Is the Jewish Community Split?")—demonstrates that this notion is an illusion. The great majority of American Jews, whether they like Begin or not, understand that the war in Lebanon was an enormous boon to Israel and to the strategic interests of the United States. The great majority of American Jews, whether they like Sharon or not, understand that the Israelis took extraordinary care to minimize civilian casualties. The great majority of American Jews, whether they like the Reagan peace plan or not, will refuse to

ICS PRESS reports the debate behind the headlines---
in time to make a difference.

AMERICAN FEDERALISM
A New Partnership for the Republic
edited by Robert B. Hawkins, Jr.
Sequoia Institute

The "New Federalism," a major component of President Reagan's economic and political program, highlights in the most fundamental way the underlying ideas of his philosophy of government. The problem of returning powers and responsibilities to state and local governments involves defining both what to return and where to find new revenue sources to support services administered locally. In this book, which includes excerpts from an Institute conference on federalism, scholars are joined by federal, state, and local policymakers to examine the problems and search for answers to these pressing questions.

250 pages paper, $7.95

THE FEDERAL BUDGET
Economics and Politics
edited by Michael J. Boskin, Stanford University
and Aaron Wildavsky, University of California, Berkeley

This study points the way out of our present budget predicament and details a series of sensible, concrete reforms for getting control over government spending, cutting deficits, and improving the budget process. Among the contributors is Alvin Rabushka, coauthor of the Hall-Rabushka "flat tax" proposal. The book also includes extensive treatment of the proposed Constitutional amendment to balance the budget, initiatives for controlling health spending, recommendations for improving defense budgeting, and more. Fresh, cutting-edge policy discussion from fifteen of the nation's leading economists and political analysts. Indispensable for understanding the current budget debate.

411 pages cloth, $19.95
paper, $8.95

Available in bookstores

ICS PRESS
An imprint of the Institute for Contemporary Studies
Dept. 220, 260 California St., San Francisco, CA 94111

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New Books in the SUNY Press Series in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture
SARAH BLACHER COHEN, EDITOR

LEGACY OF NIGHT

The Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel

ELLEN S. FINE. Foreword by TERRENCE DES PRES. In an effort to understand Wiesel's fascination with the witness, Fine explores the network of recurring themes and images that first appear in Wiesel's memoir, Night, and subsequently evolve in his novels.

"One of the finest books on Wiesel or, indeed, on the literature of the Holocaust, to appear in years."—Daniel Stern, author of Who Shall Live, Who Shall Die, and other novels.

"Fine clarifies Wiesel's intentions, especially illuminating the complex variations on the themes of speech and silence, fathers and sons, escape and return—in short, the ideas around which Wiesel organizes his literary universe. No one has done this before so thoroughly."—Lawrence L. Langer, Simmons College.

200 pp. .....$10.95 paperback / $33.50 hardcover

THE SLAYERS OF MOSES

The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory

SUSAN A. HANDELMAN. This groundbreaking study examines the theological roots of the modern science of interpretation, showing the relation of Rabbinic exegesis to Freud, Derrida, Lacan, and Bloom.

"Dr. Handelman's path is strewn with useful insights and striking connections. This book will be noticed, even debated."—James Kugel, Yale University.

"Very significant. I think this will be a widely-noted work. It is a breath of fresh air and should help get rid of some overworn pieties about the Western intellectual heritage."—Herbert N. Schneidau, University of Arizona.

284 pp. .....$12.95 paperback / $39.00 hardcover

ISRAELI HUMOR

The Content and Structure of the Chizbat of the Palmah

ELLIOTT ORING. This pioneering work on contemporary Israeli folklore introduces *chizbat* humor, reconstructs its tradition, and deciphers its meaning, showing how the humor is a living expression of Israeli society and culture. Included are over 350 of the anecdotes themselves.

"Oring succeeds in obtaining insights and understanding that a member of Israeli society would have difficulty in reaching."—Dan Ben-Amos, U. of Pennsylvania.

"Stimulates a reader to reconsider his or her assumptions about the nature and functions of humor."—Robert A. Georges, UCLA.

282 pp. .....$11.95 paperback / $39.95 hardcover

FROM STEREOTYPE TO METAPHOR

The Jew in Contemporary Drama

ELLEN SCHIFF. After centuries of being stereotyped as villain or moneyman, or idealized as biblical patriarch, the Jew on stage has evolved into a latter-day everyman. This book traces his line of descent from Church drama to the works of such modern playwrights as Miller, Gibson, Pinter, Wesker, Anouilh and Woody Allen. Schiff shows that in the decades since the second World War, Jewish characters have emerged as figures representative of contemporary humankind.

"This is the first comprehensive study of the Jew in modern theater. Ellen Schiff is well read, well informed, and has an original, sensitive grasp."—Rosette Lamont, CUNY Graduate School.

275 pp. .....$9.95 paperback / $30.50 hardcover

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS

Order through your bookstore or send check or VISA/MasterCard number, with expiration date, to **State University of New York Press, P.O. Box 978, Edison, NJ 08818.** Please add $2 for postage and handling. No cash refunds.

"WE HAD IT ALL: Reaganomics, decaying cities, massive insensitivity to the needs of the poor, a long hot summer, and yet . . . not *one single riot*. No wonder Bill Moyers looks dispirited. How about a presidential commission to inquire into the causes of the non-riots?"

For a free copy of the current issue of National Review, write to Dept. C-10. 150 East 35th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016.

Le Moal

942 Third Avenue
(Between 56 & 57 St.)
New York, N.Y. 10022 / MU 8 8860

stand passively by while dogged attempts are made everywhere to delegitimize the state of Israel or to put unilateral pressure on it, thereby weakening it for an eventual kill.

The great majority of American Jews understand one other thing, too: they understand that the duty of both Jews and non-Jews in a self-respecting and healthy democratic community is to denounce anti-Semitism when it makes a public appearance and not to justify it or apologize for it or explain it away.

The American Committee for Cultural Freedom

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I should appreciate a few lines of space in your publication to set the record straight on the American Committee for Cultural Freedom. I am addressing myself to the footnote that appeared on page 47 of the article, "My Running Debate With Einstein," by Sidney Hook [July]. I am not interested in taking issue with Mr. Hook's memory. The events described did take place twenty-five years ago. But since I was secretary to Norman Thomas during those years and a witness to the telephone conversation with Allen Dulles referred to, I claim an authority on the facts.

The American Committee for Cultural Freedom received money from the Central Intelligence Agency via the Farfield Foundation (later identified by the New York *Times* as one of the many such organizations set up by the CIA as conduits) from its inception. However unknown this fact may have been to the Committee's public or some of its supporters, it was no secret to its executive committee. When the CIA terminated its support, for reasons of its own, the executive committee discussed this crisis at one of their regular meetings. The conclusion was that they would request the CIA to renew its support at least for a limited period. As the most effective approach to this effort, they asked Norman Thomas to phone Allen Dulles directly. Mr. Thomas was not only the only member of the committee with the authority to reach Dulles's ear but, as Mr. Hook partially relates, the Thomas and Dulles families had been intimately acquainted for two generations. (The father of Foster and Allen had been one of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the most prominent Presbyterian laymen during the time when Mr. Thomas's father had been one of the most prominent Presbyterian clergymen. The Presbyterian Church has no bishops.) Mr. Thomas relayed the American Committee's request and Mr. Dulles responded by forwarding $10,000 through the Farfield Foundation.

The executive committee's discussion and decision were included in the mimeographed minutes which were regularly circulated to all committee members. I presume that the American Committee for Cultural Freedom's records are on deposit somewhere and can be consulted.

STEPHEN SITEMAN
New York City

SIDNEY HOOK writes:

Having consulted the available minutes and having checked them against the memories of those surviving members of the executive committee whom I have been able to reach, I can say categorically that Stephen Siteman is mistaken in his central contention. The executive committee of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF) never authorized Norman Thomas to approach Allen Dulles. He did this on his own. This is also apparent from Diana Trilling's recollection of the meeting (at which I was not present) in her *We Must March, My Darlings*, pp. 60ff., written in 1976.

As for the Farfield Foundation, what was revealed about it in 1967 was not known to the members of the ACCF executive committee in 1952, nor in 1954, nor in 1955. Early on, some question was raised about the source of Farfield's funds and a committee was appointed to make inquiries into the matter. When it was discovered that Julius Fleischman, president of Farfield, was a well-known philanthropist, already noted for his support of the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, the Boston Museum of Contemporary Arts, the Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, and similar other projects, it was concluded that he was the primary source of the foundation's benefactions.

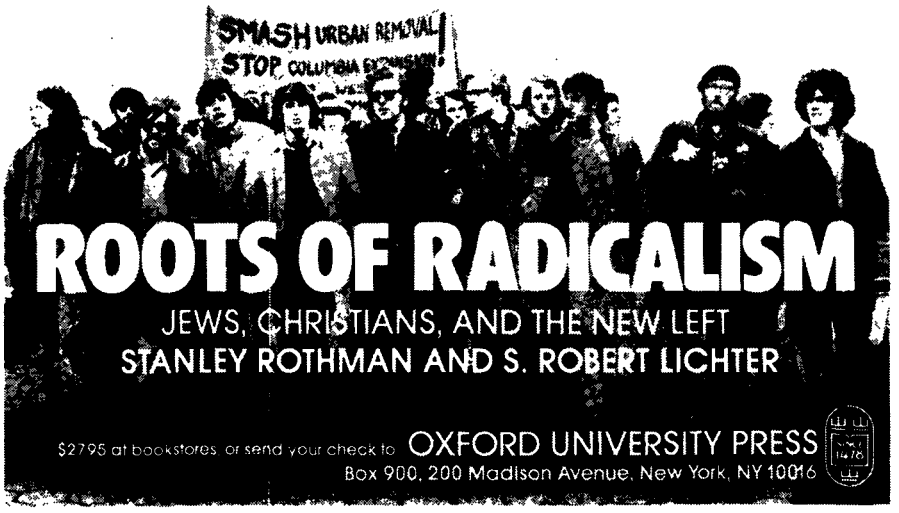
Then, in 1955, the ACCF broke with the international Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) over differences in policy and also voted not to accept any funds from the Farfield Foundation (grants to ACCF from the Farfield had primarily covered costs and overhead in hosting

The '60s radicals: selfless or self-serving?

This provocative book—based on two comprehensive psychological studies and interviews with members of SDS, the Weathermen, and other revolutionary campus organizations—raises questions about the radical mystique and why it proved especially attractive to young Jews.

"A major work....It shows how inadequate our previous understanding of this upheaval has been."—**Nathan Glazer**

"An extraordinarily skilled fusion of historical and psychological approaches to one of the most explosive decades in American social history."—**Robert Nisbet**



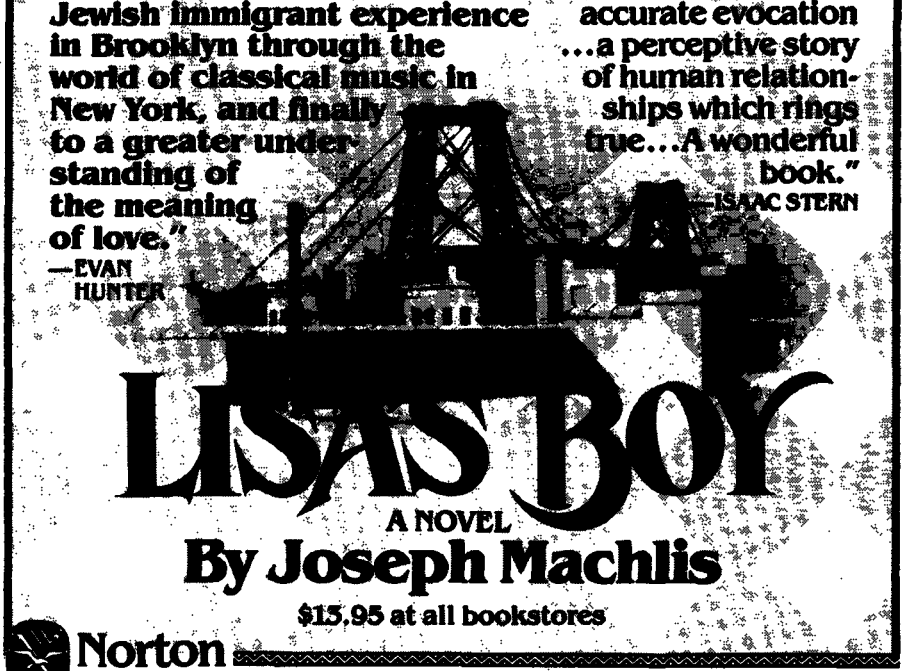
ROOTS OF RADICALISM
JEWS, CHRISTIANS, AND THE NEW LEFT
STANLEY ROTHMAN AND S. ROBERT LICHTER

$27.95 at bookstores, or send your check to OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Box 900, 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

"Joseph Machlis is the optimist's Malamud."
—NED ROREM

"A magically evocative novel that carries us from the Jewish immigrant experience in Brooklyn through the world of classical music in New York, and finally to a greater understanding of the meaning of love."
—EVAN HUNTER

"A remarkably accurate evocation ...a perceptive story of human relationships which rings true...A wonderful book."
—ISAAC STERN



LISA'S BOY
A NOVEL
By Joseph Machlis
$15.95 at all bookstores

Norton
W. W. NORTON & COMPANY, INC., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York 10110

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and touring scores of European and Asian intellectuals in the U.S. whose visits were sponsored by the Congress). Two years later, in 1957, the ACCF suspended operations altogether for lack of funds.

The ACCF, like all organizations of its kind, always had difficulties making ends meet. It was financed by contributions from a variety of sources—membership, trade unions, foundations, and some affluent liberals among its members and sympathizers. Norman Thomas was an indefatigable fund-raiser for the ACCF, especially when he was chairman of its administrative committee, and despite the burden of raising funds for his other organizations.

Whatever errors of judgment he may have made, Thomas was the outstanding liberal of our time, the standard-bearer of the chief causes working for the improvement of American society and the preservation of freedom. His integrity was unimpeachable. Every stand he took was marked by absolute independence of judgment. This was also true of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom and the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

(Act of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code)

Date of Filing: October 1, 1982. Title of Publication: Commentary. Frequency of Issue: Monthly. Location of Known Office of Publication: 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Location of the Headquarters or General Business Offices of the Publishers: 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Publisher: American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Editor: Norman Podhoretz, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Managing Editor: Marion Magid, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Owner: American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 (non-profit membership corporation incorporated by legislature of the State of New York). Known Bond-Holders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None. For Completion by Non-Profit Organizations Authorized to Mail at Special Rates: The purpose, function, and non-profit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months. Extent and Nature of Circulation: A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 45,306. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 44,718. B. Paid Circulation: 1. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 6,039. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 5,845. 2. Mail Subscriptions: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 37,122. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 36,622. C. Total Paid Circulation: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 43,161. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 42,467. D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier, or Other Means: Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 1,031. 2. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 1,014. E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 44,192. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 43,481. F. Copies Not Distributed: 1. Office Use, Left Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 836. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 925. 2. Returns From News Agents: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 278. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 312. G. Total (Sum of E and F): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 45,306. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 44,718. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Philip Shamis, Comptroller.

The Peace Lovers

To the Editor of Commentary:

Edward N. Luttwak's arguments ["How to Think About Nuclear War," August] are so clear, so obviously right, so exhaustive—and yet so futile; for we know his opponents possess one last argument that nullifies the rest: they know they will not fight.

In 1937 one could reasonably hope that England and the United States would fight sooner or later. The tragedy was in the loss that could have been avoided if we had been prepared to fight sooner. Mr. Luttwak's opponents know there will be no "later" for them and they make it manifest that they do not care. The license to regard every restraint and obligation as an infringement of liberty has dulled the awareness of what real deprivation of freedom is. The sensibility which has learned to see a storm-trooper in a Chicago policeman is insensate to the real boot on the neck of a real victim. To be left in peace is such people's highest good; hence nothing is worth fighting for. That is what they call loving peace....

Mr. Luttwak is disturbed, and rightly so, that the Reagan administration . . . has lost its nerve. Has the administration not discovered, as President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger discovered earlier, that the American people are really not behind it?

"Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?" Those words were spoken by Patrick Henry 100 yards from where I sit. My local newspaper reported this morning a reputable poll of Richmond voters in which only 27 percent opposed a nuclear-arms freeze. President Reagan won Richmond by a large and enthusiastic majority. If Virginians have so lost their nerve, of what avail will Mr. Luttwak's arguments be throughout the United States and in Europe?

It is time to put a name to this "love of peace": it is cowardice.... The President is well advised not to confront the disarmament issue publicly; he must build our forces only as fast as they can be built without a majority behind him; and we must pray for time and a revival of faith in the values of Western civilization.

Michael W. Gold
Richmond, Virginia

"E.T."

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his "Summertime Visions" [August] Richard Grenier seems to have gone overboard in his eagerness to prove that Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* is basically the product of a left-wing "liberal" mentality. As far as I can determine, his essential view is that the movie borders on the subversive—in fact, falls into the "anti-national" category because it takes a benign view of an extraterrestrial creature who descends to Earth (the United States) only to find hostility and aggression, except for the youngsters who befriend him. This approach, he says, is the hallmark of "liberal" film-makers in America.

In a long footnote, Mr. Grenier discusses the approach of Soviet animal films, in which nature is "merciless" and the progression, as he says, is "hunt, pursue, kill, eat." Clearly Mr. Grenier is strongly anti-Soviet—all well and good—but what is his purpose in pointing to the viciousness of Soviet animal films? Does he offer it as an exemplar of "reality" as opposed to the benign *E.T.*? Should American moviemakers outdo the Russians in presenting animal life and otherworld visitors as cruel and rapacious so that we can forge ahead on the toughness index?

We often hear the expression "they behaved like animals" applied to particularly vicious human actions. The simile has always seemed to me totally unfair and inaccurate, since no animals I know of are even remotely capable of the elaborate cruelty, hypocrisy, and downright evil so prevalent among humans. (Animals, for example, have never been known to embark on a program of genocide.)

To be sure, if *E.T.* is to be reduced to an animal tale, then it is definitely the classic boy-and-his-dog story dressed up in outerspace trappings. In all such movies—of which there must be scores, going back to *Our Gang* and before—the animal is always cute, sweet, and kind, and the kids are always protecting him from the adult world. The adults are the bad guys—dogcatchers, stepmothers, unfeeling parents, teachers. In Disney's movies (*Bambi, Dumbo, Old Yeller,* etc.), the animals are the good guys, and the baddies are hunters and other American adults. Needless to say, Disney was not famous for being a liberal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Grenier appears to be saying, "Why don't we show 'them' (animals and extraterrestrial visitors) as bad or vicious and us (humans, grownups, Americans) as good? This is what any decent, patriotic movie would do." This line abruptly and retrospectively makes subversives or liberals (Mr. Grenier makes no distinction between them) of the authors of most of the myths, legends, fairy tales, movies, and other works that have dealt with this theme through the centuries.

HAROLD STEINBERG
Editor/Publisher
Coming Attractions
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Reviewers of American films have long been plagued by the difficulty of functioning as intellectuals in a milieu that has been overwhelmingly devoted to entertainment, and profits. One could almost posit a law that the more intellectually rigorous the publication is, the more likely are its film reviewers to be uncomfortable with the films people like to see.

In Richard Grenier's case, this has come to be combined with a very rigorous commitment to an increasingly rigid neoconservative ideology. Thus he not only is intimidated by entertaining movies, but likes to see anti-American ideologies where none exist. . . .

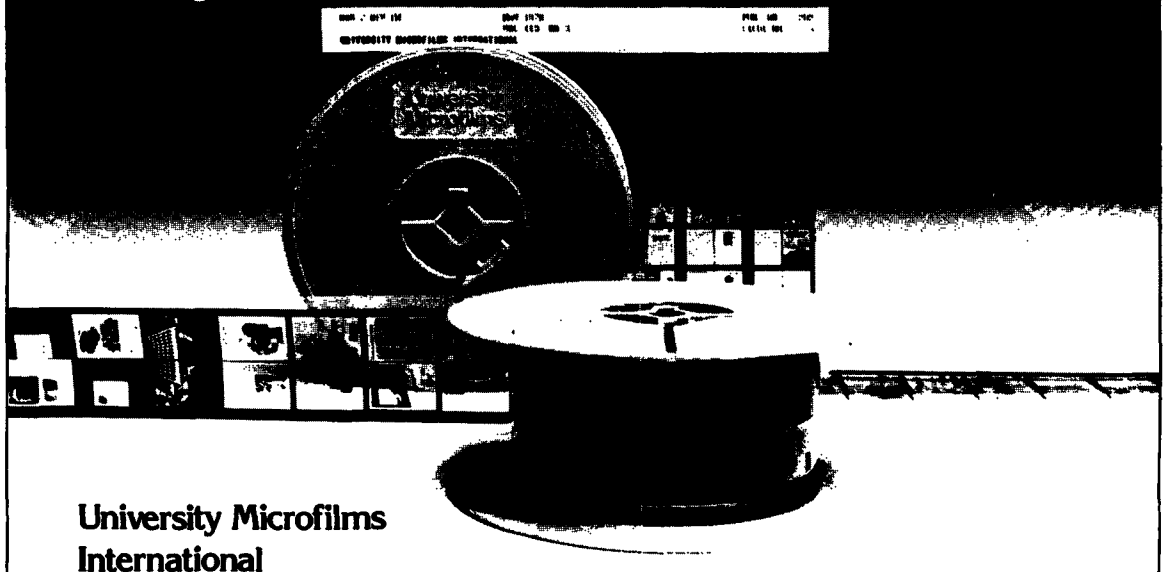
Mr. Grenier's review of *E.T.* is a good case in point. If Steven Spielberg has a "position" to propound (which is doubtful), it is that of the child. He has profited immensely from creating, as he has said, the kinds of films he liked as a child. And they do present a child's view of the world. Adults *are* the enemy to children—not Russian adults, or American adults, or any specific shape, size, color, or nationality; just the big people who have all the power. Since the film takes place in America, it would hardly make much sense to have the adults be Russians, which seems to be what Mr. Grenier would have liked. . . .

JOHN M. ALLSWANG
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When a movie features a protagonist who performs miracles, transforms the lives of those he meets through the power of love, dies at the hands of the authorities but is resurrected, then affirms his continuing spiritual presence with his followers and ascends into the heavens, I should think—to paraphrase Richard Grenier—it would be plain what it is about. . . . That Mr. Grenier admires Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* because he perceives it to be "a film about the human condition . . . with a startling burst of Christian symbolism" makes all the more confounding the blind eye he turns toward the allegory of Jesus Christ in Steven Spielberg's *E.T.*, which might as well be subtitled *The Gospel According to Steven*. (Whether Spielberg and

This publication is available in microform.



University Microfilms International

Please send additional information
for _____
(name of publication)
Name _____
Institution _____
Street _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

300 North Zeeb Road
Dept. P.R.
Ann Arbor, Mi. 48106
U.S.A.

30-32 Mortimer Street
Dept. P.R.
London W1N 7RA
England

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

company intended to create such a full-blown Christian allegory is a problem I leave for others to solve.) . . . And in fairness to Mr. Grenier, it seems that all the other film critics also failed to see *E.T.*'s pervasive parallels to the Gospel story of Jesus. . . .

Although our society sustains itself on an apparently secular diet, the unprecedented popular response to *E.T.* betrays a latent craving for the religious.

WILLIAM E. HEWITT
Chicago, Illinois

RICHARD GRENIER writes:

I agree with much of what William E. Hewitt says. The unprecedented popular response to *E.T.* surely betrays a latent craving for something. I will go further: the something that is craved is related to the void left by the decline in belief in the traditional Western religions. Mr. Hewitt makes a decent case that there are definite parallels between the story of *E.T.* and that of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, and I will give my own view of this: the *E.T.* version of the Gospels is not far from the degraded version of Christianity that is all many people in our society seem to have retained.

Where Mr. Hewitt and I perhaps differ is that, in my judgment, this *E.T.* version of Christianity is utterly debased. Where is original sin? Where is Christ the Redeemer? In the version of Christianity I was taught, Jesus came to redeem mankind. In *E.T.*, which I would agree has drawn considerably from Christian notions (although unconsciously, as on a somewhat different level Bertrand Russell said Karl Marx drew on Christianity for his notion of the socialist paradise), we have a gang of prelapsarian children not in need of redemption at all. In Christian doctrine, man is capable of both good and evil, but these children are purely good. They are so good they "resurrect" E.T. through the regenerative power of their love —surely a bizarre episode from a Christian point of view.

I realize that Mr. Hewitt is not saying that E.T.'s story is the story of Jesus down to every last detail, but the whole spirit of the movie is so saccharine—E.T. is sweet, he comes from a sweet place, his friends are sweet, he gets drunk in a sweet way—that I cannot reconcile it with Christianity, in which the problems of sin, evil, and human suffering are fundamental. I think *E.T.* derives its basic world view from the tooth fairy, Prince Charming, and Brer Rabbit. If Mr. Hewitt finds in this movie a guide for the Christian life in this vale of sorrow and woe, then I politely differ. I think *E.T.* is pap.

Where has John M. Allswang been all these decades? During my entire lifetime, the analysis and interpretation of mass culture have been the favorite sport of American intellectuals. So "uncomfortable" am I with, and so "intimidated" am I by, "films people like to see," that I devote most of my articles to them. If Mr. Allswang checks back, moreover, he will find that I give many of them better notices than I give to a number of the films anointed by the elite few. Most of my "Summertime Visions," after all, is a highly appreciative account of *Blade Runner*, which was a successful mass movie.

Mr. Allswang reminds me of my common ground with Mr. Hewitt. For I am sorry, Mr. Allswang, but Steven Spielberg definitely does have a "position" to propound. There is the Sermon on the Mount part of his position, which Mr. Hewitt and I have just been debating. Another part of Steven Spielberg's position might become clear to Mr. Allswang if he, first, reread my article (he seems to have skipped a fair amount) and then saw Spielberg's recent movie—and a giant movie it was—*1941*. Artists are always asking to be judged by the entirety of their *oeuvre*, so I think we have every right to note that in *1941*, which takes place shortly after Pearl Harbor, every show of patriotism, love of country, or eagerness to fight in its defense is treated with the most intense ridicule. Now what kind of person would make a film like that, I wonder?

I think Harold Steinberg, too, should see Spielberg's *1941*. And, yes, I do think Soviet nature films give a more accurate picture of "reality" than does the benign *E.T.*, which leads me to the interesting question (since he raises it himself), just what kind of animals does Mr. Steinberg know? Bambi? Dumbo? Old Yeller? His dog? His cat? Well, indeed, compared to animals like that, I suppose human beings really are quite awful.

But I am not certain I really follow Mr. Steinberg's reasoning. First he calls my Soviet animal films "vicious"—whereas they are only realistic, many members of the animal kingdom (no friends of Mr. Steinberg, of course) being simple predators. Then he is off *championing* animals against human beings, so many of whom are prone to "elaborate cruelty, hypocrisy, and downright evil." Since I have never met a hypocritical animal, I suppose I should consider Mr. Steinberg a deep thinker, but this still leaves me unclear as to where he stands on animals in their natural state, the ones who kill to live. If I understand him correctly, he thinks they are better than human beings (since they do not commit genocide), but he still does not want to see movies about them, preferring the Bambis and Dumbos of yore. Now there is a case for telling fairy tales about innocuous animals to the young, but, as Mr. Steinberg will have noticed, the audience for *E.T.* is largely adult. And I am not certain it is healthy for fully grown adults to continue to consume fairy tales designed for children.

Mr. Steinberg seems to think I am part of a plot to take Bambi and Dumbo away from him. And he is right. Until he outgrows Dumbo, I won't answer any more of his letters.

Vietnam

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was deeply impressed by Stephen J. Morris's article about my father's land ["Vietnam Under Communism," September]. No one can deny that the inhumanity of the Vietnamese Communists and their territorial ambitions have kept Southeast Asia as a free-fire zone even at this moment. And the struggle . . . still goes on: Laos and Kampuchea are controlled by Vietnam. Therefore, I would like to ask those who once upon a time were lured by the propaganda of the Vietnamese Communists, . . . please turn back and listen to the words of a one-time President of Vietnam—don't believe what the Communists say, just see what they do.

TUAN NGUYEN
Allentown, Pennsylvania

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The taste is extravagant. The price, merely indulgent.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A partridge in a pear tree

Two turtledoves

Three French hens

Four calling birds

Five gold rings

Six geese a-laying

Seven swans a-swimming

Eight maids a-milking

Nine ladies dancing

Ten lords a-leaping

Eleven pipers piping

Twelve drummers drumming

What people gave before there was Chivas Regal.

12 YEARS OLD WORLDWIDE • BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY • 86 PROOF • © 1982 GENERAL WINE & SPIRITS CO., NEW YORK, N.Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED